

**MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 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, Ms. Kelly Rumley

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Ms. Diana Hauman, Ward 8 Alderman; Mr. George Boyle, City Attorney; Mr. Jim Karch, Director of Public Works; 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 4:02 pm.

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

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:
There was no Public Comment,

4. MINUTES: Reviewed and approved the minutes of the August 21, 2018 regular meeting of the Bloomington Transportation Commission. Ms. Kooba motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Blair seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the Transportation Commission unanimously via voice vote.

5. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. TC-2018-05: Approval of 2019 Meeting Dates

Reviewed and approved the proposed schedule of meetings on the 3rd Tuesday of each month for 2019. Ms. Blair motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Bradley seconded the motion. No discussion. The motion was approved by the Transportation Commission unanimously via voice vote.

B. TC-2018-06: Recommendations to USPS Regarding Post Office Relocation

Mr. Allyn gave a short presentation on the recent decision by the USPS to relocate customer service operations. City Staff have been discussing potential impacts to the surrounding area, specifically the frontage road running along the south side of Empire Street and its intersection at Fairway Drive. The City has requested that a traffic study be completed as discussed in the agenda packet as would be required for private developers. There were problems with traffic flow and congestion when customer service operations were at this location previously. Other previous problems were with traffic flow as the drop-off boxes were within the parking area. Potential remediation discussed included creating a cul-de-sac on the frontage road at Fairway and connecting the parking lot to the mall entrance to the south allowing traffic to access Fairway at an existing traffic signal. The cul-de-sac could also potentially serve as a point for the drop-off boxes. Mr. Allyn discussed the relation of the recently IDOT-approved Fairway and Empire project and the potential post office traffic impacts. The USPS initially was receptive to the cul-de-sac concept, but later backed off. They have recently restarted dialogue with the City. They are focusing on internal site configurations and not considering overall impacts to the area. Staff is requesting backing from the Commission in the form of the proposed letter to the USPS requesting a formal traffic study.

Ms. Blair asked about the cul-de-sac. Mr. Allyn clarified that it would disconnect the frontage road from Fairway. We have also been encouraging them to work with their neighbors, Eastland Mall and Talbots to make the best use of the area. One other benefit of eliminating the frontage road connection to Fairway is the ability then to remove the raised median currently providing access control. This would allow the reinstatement of the northbound left turn that was required to be removed when the Fairway bike lanes were added.

Ms. Blair asked about jurisdiction of the frontage road. Mr. Allyn indicated that it technically falls on IDOT's right of way; however, they have left us to maintain it. What this typically means in practice is that the City has control of it as long as we do not do something IDOT does not like. Eliminating the frontage road connection to Fairway with a cul-de-sac would require IDOT approval. Mr. Gorman asked if that means the City would be required to construct the cul-de-sac. Mr. Allyn indicated that it was too early to know. Typically, developers are required to fund infrastructure improvements needed because of their projects. In this situation, the City would see some benefits of this change as well, so this may be an opportunity for cost sharing if needed to get the best possible solution.

Mr. Gorman asked if the connection could be eliminated more cost effectively using planters or other obstacles on the existing pavement rather than constructing a cul-de-sac if the City has to pay for it. Mr. Allyn indicated that the main issue with that would be the inability for drivers to turn around as would be needed at the end of a public street. A hammerhead for 3-point turns could be a cheaper option than a cul-de-sac, but there could be safety issues if there are a higher number of vehicles on the street.

Mr. Gorman mentioned that there is a right turn across the bike lane on Fairway with the current IDOT approved Fairway plan. Would it be possible to provide a dedicated right turn lane to the outside of the bike lane to reduce the chance of a right hook crash with a bicyclist? Mr. Allyn indicated that could be looked at, but would require going back to the start of the 9-month process with IDOT. Mr. Gorman suggested additional signage encouraging drivers to enter the bike lane prior to the intersection and then making the right turn from the bike lane rather than turning across it. Mr. Allyn agreed with this suggestion.

Mr. Gorman asked about the positioning of the drop off boxes within the cul-de-sac. Mr. Allyn indicated that the actual layout would still need to be worked out so that the boxes are on the driver's side of the car without forcing cars to drive the wrong way around the cul-de-sac. The takeaway point is that the cul-de-sac could provide an alternative location for the drop off boxes that is not in the main parking area.

Mr. Gorman mentioned that there are many parking areas around the building, mostly used by USPS vehicles. Could some of these areas be utilized by the public, specifically the north end of the parking area between the building and Fairway? Mr. Allyn indicated that late-Thursday or Friday of the previous week, the USPS started to send us some concepts for reconfiguring some of the access points along Fairway. We intend to continue dialogue with them on this point.

Ms. Bradley inquired about ownership of the various parking areas around the USPS and Talbots buildings. Mr. Allyn reviewed ownership of the various parcels. Ms. Bradley asked about potentially using some of the Talbot's or mall parking areas for the postal vehicles to allow more room for customers. There are more people sending packages that require parking and entering the building and fewer using a drop boxes for letter. Ms. Bradley liked the suggested letter, and as someone who remembers the problems with this location previously, does not feel there is any way we can go back to that again. It did not work then and will not work now. The problems on the frontage road and the intersection of Fairway and Empire were significant.

Ms. Blair asked for the status of the Empire USPS building and the likelihood that the USPS would leave it in the near future. If they were planning on staying long term, it would make more sense to do something nicer (trees, benches, etc.) rather than just abruptly ending the frontage road. Mr. Allyn

indicated that the key to the cul-de-sac is that we cannot end a public street in such a way that people cannot turn around if they travel to the end. There may be an opportunity for discussion about vacating the frontage road. This would allow the frontage road to function as a long driveway that could end at the parking lot. The City cannot however rely on using private property to turn around on a public street. Mr. Gorman reminded that complicating that discussion is the fact that the right of way to be vacated is actually IDOT's, not the City's.

Mr. Allyn added that the question of how long the USPS stays in this building is probably more related to the longer-term viability of the USPS itself and how long it continues to need this large of a facility with the decline in mail being sent. The USPS does own this building whereas they were leasing the Towanda building and are planning on spending around \$2.2 million on the renovation. This is a lot of money to spend on somewhere they are not planning on staying for a while.

Ms. Bradley asked about the ownership of the Talbots property and building. Mr. Allyn indicated it was owned by the mall and leased to Talbots. Mr. Allyn indicated that the entire length of the frontage road could be vacated back to Empire Crossing. This would require post office patrons to travel across mall property, which might require some type of easement agreement. He reiterated that the USPS really needs to be talking with their neighbors about the best overall solution.

Ms. Blair motioned to approve Mr. Allyn sending out the letter on behalf of the Commission. Ms. Browne seconded the motion. No additional discussion. The motion was approved by the Transportation Commission unanimously via voice vote.

C. Information: August Citizen Comments/Complaints Summary

Ms. Bradley asked about the Stone Mountain area concerns. Has there been consideration of lowering the speed limit along College from 35 mph to 30 mph? This is a very residential area with a school and a popular park. Mr. Allyn indicated that we are currently gathering data and will be digging into this situation more deeply. Ms. Bradley noted the comparison of this area to the stretch of Hershey Road that was lowered to 30 mph relatively recently.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- A. Ms. Bradley brought back for discussion the speeding topic from the previous meeting. The people who came for public comment made some very good points. She inquired where this topic was going. In conversations with various people around the community, there isn't support for lowering the speed limit. Could the Aldermen find the traffic trouble spots in their wards, which could then be ranked and knocked off one by one? Evans Street is a unique situation. If there is a problem, fix it and take it off the list. West MacArthur is a racetrack and people on Wood Street should not have to feel unsafe crossing the street to get to Miller Park. There are some traffic issues. We are transitioning from priority on moving traffic to safer neighborhoods, so we need to move forward on that and start getting involvement by the Council. Mr. Allyn indicated that we are planning on bringing this back for discussion in October. Staff has been gathering requested data to help inform the discussion but did not have everything ready for this meeting. The change in the citywide speed limit is something that will specifically be discussed. Mr. Boyle indicated that he was able to research the legal aspects of the speed limit change and confirmed that municipalities are allowed to specify the speed on their local streets, but not on streets under the jurisdiction of others such as IDOT. There are some parameters such as the City cannot set a speed more than 20 mph lower than the State Statutory Speed. Mr. Allyn asked about the process. Mr. Boyle indicated that it would just take passing an ordinance and updating the City Code.

Mr. Gorman asked if there are specific parameters or boundaries that would need to be followed or if the City could set the statutory speed limit as it saw fit. Mr. Boyle indicated that his understanding is that it would need to have some type of basis rather than just choosing a random number, but that there is a fair amount of legislative prerogative available. It appears that the only

real requirement is that the City cannot go more than 20 mph below the State. Since the State value is set at 30 mph, and we wouldn't want to go less than 10 mph, this shouldn't be a problem.

- B. Ms. Bradley brought back for discussion the funding of our street maintenance work. She indicated a concern about raising the local motor fuel tax and believes it is a bad idea right now. There aren't any other communities with fuel taxes that high. The Council needs to creatively look at finances before we proceed with this discussion. There are other budget problems such as the Coliseum and in the meantime, we need help with the streets. Do we need to look back at the 20-year plan? Do we need to reevaluate the commitment to brick streets? What is the shorter-term fix for our streets? Mr. Allyn indicated that would be part of the upcoming bigger discussion. We need to discuss a combination of reduced service (oil and chip in some places instead of hot-mix asphalt, etc.) and finding additional revenue somewhere. Ms. Bradley challenged the Aldermen to look creatively at the budget and finding funding for the streets. We need to start looking outside the box.

Mr. Gorman indicated that this is what we are trying to do. In March, the Commission recognized that our current funding and maintenance is not sustainable and directed Staff to develop a sustainable model that includes cuts since just the local fuel tax increase does not solve the long-term problem. People recognize that a short-term solution would also be beneficial. Staff is working on a solution that the Commission needs to vet before it goes back to Council.

Ms. Bradley reiterated that Council needs to be part of the discussion and seek solutions, and not just dump the responsibility all on Staff to create solutions. Council needs to be contributing to the discussion.

Mr. Gorman said that Council has delegated initial vetting of transportation policy to this Commission. Current infrastructure funding model is not sustainable. We are still in the process of researching the solution.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Ms. Bradley introduced a new topic: The intersection of Airport Road and Cornelius Drive. Ms. Bradley indicated great concern for this intersection and what kind of control device will be installed. Currently under construction is the new Eye Center with 40,000 patients to the southeast of this intersection, Biaggi's is relocating, Central Catholic High School is already there.

Mr. Allyn indicated that this intersection is a two-way stop and there are currently no plans to change. We will be monitoring it moving forward. The Eye Center has an entrance to Cornelius, but it and Biaggi's will also have access directly to Airport Road. There will also be a right-in-right-out access on Route 9 (Empire Street) at the east end of the Airport Road right turn lane that the State has approved. There will also be a connection to Trinity Lane that will allow access to Route 9/Empire Street further east. Ms. Bradley asked that we look at this closer.

8. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Ms. Blair requested that reference material be send out earlier. It would be helpful to get each piece as it is available rather than waiting until the entire packet is available.

Ms. Browne asked about procedure if we notice something as citizens. Mr. Allyn indicated it would be most helpful if Commissioners completed and submitted the Non-Emergency Request form or the My Bloomington app. Commissioner can feel free to mention it during meetings, but using the form or app if preferred so that we can more easily track the request. Ms. Browne mentioned there is a transit stop across Washington from the Foundry/Green Top Grocery and that there is no good way to get across the street

without walking fairly far west to the underpass. It is difficult to cross for people with different levels of mobility. Can we provide a safer way to cross from the bus stop to the Foundry?

Mr. Gorman indicated that during discussion of the Washington Street Bike Master Plan Amendment, Alderman Buragas proposed a more comprehensive review of pedestrian access along that corridor that included a cross walk at this location. Typically, pavement markings are done with street resurfacing, but since adding the crosswalk wouldn't require large-scale marking removals, it might be able to be added. Ms. Browne indicated that part of the problem is the speed of traffic on Washington. Mr. Gorman mentioned this might be a good location for a HAWK signal to help cross. Mr. Allyn indicated the HAWK is more advanced and involves three lights that flash and actually stop traffic. We are using RRFB's instead on Front Street and on Hershey to the north of Hamilton Road. The HAWK costs significantly more and is fairly unknown in Central Illinois, but would be more effective.

Ms. Rumley requested talking to Connect Transit if there is a problem with their stop location and its suitability for riders using wheelchairs.

Mr. Allyn mentioned that the Annual Complete Streets Report has been posted on the website.

Mr. Allyn indicated that we have begun work on Front Street. The Traffic Signals will be deactivated later this week. Sidewalk removal and replacement begins Monday.

9. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 4:57 pm unanimously by voice vote; motioned by Ms. Blair and seconded by Ms. Rumley.

Respectfully,

Philip Allyn
City Traffic Engineer