



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

MINUTES

Transportation Policy Advisory Committee

October 25, 2018, 6:00 PM
2nd Floor Conference Room
City Hall, 41 Green Street, Concord, NH

Members Present:

Dick Lemieux (Vehicle Traffic Safety Operations; Chair)
Brent Todd (Council Representative)
Rob Werner (Council Representative)
Craig Tufts (Bicycling Community)
Ursula Maldonado (Pedestrian and Trails Community)
Sheila Zakre (At-Large)
Rebecca McWilliams (At-Large)
Greg Bakos (At-Large)
Rob Mack, Traffic Engineer (City Manager's Designee)

Members Absent:

Ryan Buchanan (At-Large) – not excused
Jim Sudak (Public Transportation Representative) - not excused

Staff and Guests:

Dave Cedarholm (City Engineer)

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the August 23, 2018 meeting were approved with minor amendment (Motion-McWilliams; Second-Todd; Unanimous).

3. Public Comment - None

4. Presentations - None

5. New Business - None

6. Old Business - None

7. Consent Reports

a. Acceptance of Subcommittee Minutes

The following subcommittee reports were accepted by unanimous consent: Bicycle/Pedestrian – August 6 and September 10, 2018; and Public Transportation – August 7, 2018.

8. City Council Meeting Update

Brent Todd noted that no transportation-related items were considered.

9. TPAC Referrals from City Council, Staff and Chair

a. Referral to TOC from Councilor Nyhan regarding a resident concern on traffic speed along Broadway at Allison and Pillsbury Streets

At issue is a concern by a Pillsbury Street resident on traffic speeds and accidents on Broadway at the intersections with Allison and Pillsbury Streets. Stated concerns include excessive travel speed and cars not stopping for pedestrians in the crosswalks. Several crashes were noted this summer.

Rob Mack noted that Engineering and TOC conducted a comprehensive speed and safety study of both of these intersections in 2012 in response to a similar concern, with findings reported to City Council in a report dated November 29, 2012. Measured speeds were reported to be reasonable and reported crashes were low. TOC felt that safe pedestrian crossings of Broadway at either intersection could be made with proper pedestrian-crossing action (looking both ways, making ‘eye contact’ and not stepping in front of an approaching vehicle unless one is certain it is stopping). Sight lines approaching crosswalk areas were very good, vehicle speeds appeared generally appropriate, street lighting and pedestrian signs were located at both locations, and pedestrian crossing delay was relatively low even during peak times. TOC suggested at the time that crossing safety could be enhanced by constructing corner bump-outs at each intersection. Similar recommendations were also made in the 2008 Safe Routes to School Travel Plan for the former Conant-Rundlett Schools.

CPD followed up on the subject referral by heavily targeting the area with speed enforcement. A CPD officer also reached out to the resident to discuss her concerns. Engineering staff reviewed both intersection locations and found sight lines to be reasonable. Excessive speeds were not observed at the time. The stop sign facing the Pillsbury Street westbound approach was noted as becoming partially obscured by overhanging branches. General Services followed up by installing a ‘Stop Ahead’ sign on this westbound street approach in late August. The aforementioned overhanging branches were also trimmed. A review of recent crash history at the Broadway/Pillsbury intersection indicated that about half of reported crashes were related to running the stop sign on the Pillsbury Street westbound approach. Staff feels that the vegetation trimming and additional advisory sign added by GSD on this approach might act to mitigate recent crash history reported here. Staff will continue to monitor crash history here.

TPAC concurred with the findings and follow-up actions of staff and TOC.

b. Referral to TOC from Councilor Nyhan regarding a resident concern on traffic speed on Wilson Avenue and a request for sidewalk

At issue is a concern by Lisa Bowman, resident of Wilson Avenue, on vehicle speeds, cut-through traffic and lack of sidewalk on her street. Similar concerns were recently communicated to Engineering staff by several neighbors. Bob Brown, resident of Wilson Avenue, attended TOC’s June 19, 2018 meeting and presented neighbors’ concerns. He noted his family has lived there for six years and feels that traffic speeds are high, especially on the section between South Street and Norwich Street which through traffic also uses as a shortcut to Clinton Street. He would like to see the speed trailer deployed here. He felt that there are no speed limit signs there to indicate the 25 mph speed. TOC offered to follow up on residents’ concerns.

CPD deployed the speed-feedback trailer on Wilson Avenue in early July. A patrol officer also spoke with one of the residents regarding speed issues. The resident noted that neighbors were pleased with the speed trailer deployment. The resident also noted that while watching various vehicle speeds displayed by the trailer, he was surprised to find that traffic was actually traveling at a much slower speed than he otherwise thought was occurring.

Engineering conducted a volume and speed count along Wilson Avenue. The weekday volume in early July, 2018 was around 750 to 850 vehicles per day. A 2011 count in early June indicated about 950 vehicles per day, slightly higher as school would have been in session. Staff feels that the volume of traffic appears reasonable for this type of street that services a large neighborhood area and is not indicative of a substantial 'cut-through' traffic pattern. Some cut-through traffic would be expected between South and Clinton Streets, for example South Street traffic accessing the churches at the Clinton/Norwich intersection. The City's Transportation Master Plan acknowledges the need to maintain connectivity through and between neighborhoods so that travelers have options in navigating the city's street network.

Speeds were also recorded along Wilson Avenue over a the several-day July count, with and without the presence of CPD's speed trailer. Prior to the trailer deployment, average speeds were 24-26 mph and 85th percentile speeds were 30-32 mph. With the speed trailer deployed, average speeds were about 24-25 mph and 85th percentile speeds reduced to 28-31 mph. The street is appropriately posted with 25 mph speed limit signs. TOC and CPD concur that significant speeding does not appear to be an overall problem on this street. Inappropriate speed could certainly be attributable to a few inconsiderate drivers and that enforcement would be the appropriate action.

Regarding sidewalk, it was noted that the City's Pedestrian Master Plan indicates that sidewalk along Wilson Avenue from South Street to Norwich Street is recommended for future implementation, but not as a priority. This sidewalk would typically be considered for construction when the street is reconstructed (not yet programmed in upcoming years). TPAC's Bicycle-Pedestrian Subcommittee also reviewed this request at its August 6, 2018 meeting and felt that while a sidewalk connection along this street might be beneficial, it does not appear to be warranted at this time when compared to the priority sidewalk locations recommended in the Pedestrian Master Plan.

TOC discussed this referral at its July 19, August 21 and September 18, 2018 meetings. TPAC concurred with the findings and follow-up actions of staff and TOC.

c. Referral to TOC from City Council regarding a resident concern with excessive traffic speed along Rumford Street between Centre and Washington Streets

Rob Mack reported that CPD reached out to the resident about the speeding concerns. CPD was unable to find a suitable location for deployment of the speed trailer along this section of Rumford Street due to curb, sidewalk and on-street parking. CPD conducted targeted speed enforcement here with motorcycle units but did not observe any speeding violations. Engineering Services recorded speeds along this section of Rumford Street over a several-day period in early September, 2018. Of about 2,300 vehicles sampled, average speeds were 23 mph and 85th percentile speeds were 28 mph. This is significantly lower than the street's 30 mph speed limit and results from street's seeming narrowness due to on-street parking. TOC and CPD concurred that significant speeding does not appear to be an overall problem on this street. Inappropriate speed could certainly be attributable to a few inconsiderate drivers and that enforcement would be the appropriate action. TOC members felt that a perception of 'high speed' can also be induced by the apparent narrowness of the travel-way with cars parked along the street.

TOC discussed this referral at its August 21 and September 18, 2018 meetings. TPAC concurred with the findings and follow-up actions of staff and TOC.

d. Referral to TOC and TPAC from City Council regarding a petition from Guay Street residents to reduce the speed limit on neighborhood streets or install sidewalk

Rob Mack summarized that Tom Burrill, resident of Guay Street, spoke at TPAC's August 23, 2018 meeting regarding a petition submitted to City Council in August from 31 residents on Guay Street, Cricket Lane, Temi Road and Dennis Drive asking for a reduced speed limit or sidewalks in the neighborhood. His primary concerns resulted from a close and uncomfortable encounter with an inconsiderate and speeding driver who was soon after identified and spoken to by CPD. His concerns include some traffic driving too fast, streets narrowed by on-street parking and potentially restricting access by emergency or other large vehicles, lack of stop and speed limit signs, and walking safety as there is no sidewalk. TPAC referred the inquiry to TOC which considered the request at its September 18, 2018 meeting.

The above streets constitute a small cul-de-sac neighborhood of about three dozen homes. These streets are short and vary in length from about 200 ft to 1,000 ft. Engineering Services recorded speeds along Guay Street over a several-day period in early September, 2018. Of about 600 vehicles sampled, average speeds were 17-18 mph and 85th percentile speeds were 24 mph. While no speed limit signs are posted in the small neighborhood, overall speeds are lower than either the 30 mph statutory speed limit, or a potential 25 mph posting. CPD also performed targeted speed enforcement on Guay Street, but did not note any inappropriate speeds. TOC and CPD concurred that significant speeding does not appear to be an overall problem on this street. Inappropriate speed could certainly be attributable to a few inconsiderate drivers and that enforcement would be the appropriate action, as was the case here as initiated by the resident. TOC noted that these streets were good examples of the many local residential streets that would be included in the potential city-wide 25 mph speed limit to be considered by TPAC and others during the 2020 update to the City's Transportation Master Plan.

Regarding sidewalk, TOC noted that the City's Pedestrian Master Plan recommends future sidewalk along Cricket Lane (from the gate), Temi Road and Guay Street from Temi Road to Pembroke Road. Sidewalk is not indicated along Guay Street north of Temi Road. These sidewalk segments are not indicated as priority sidewalk segments and would typically be considered for construction when the street is reconstructed (not yet programmed in upcoming years).

Regarding the request for stop signs in the neighborhood, it was noted that city practice is to install stop signs at locations based on an engineering study for need and not solely for speed control. Minor-street approaches to T-intersections do not generally require stop signs as the minor side street very clearly terminates at the cross-street and NH Statutes (rules of the road) require drivers to yield the right-of-way to drivers on the through street. In small residential pockets like this neighborhood, adding more stop signs would have no apparent effect on vehicle operation but would contribute to sign clutter and visual impact.

Mr. Burrill's concerns also include potential street blockage by on-street parking which might occur if cars parked on the street opposite each other. Staff notes that Guay Street, along with the other neighborhood streets, is about 22 feet wide. This is wide enough to park on one side of the street and still allow a minimum of 12 feet for other vehicles to pass by per the Ordinance. At the August 23, 2018 TPAC meeting, Mr. Burrill was advised that if cars were ever parked on both sides and immediately opposite each other, that the 12-foot minimum would not be maintained; in this case the police department should be contacted.

CPD met with the Burrill's on October 17, 2018 to further discuss each of their petitioned concerns as well as summarize TOC's findings as summarized above. They were appreciative of the CPD enforcement efforts and felt that they have seen a change in neighbors' driving habits. They said with the added police patrols and recent talk among the neighbors about speeds, it appears folks are more cognizant of their speed. They still noted a concern on the potential for cars to park on both sides of

the street and emergency vehicles not being able to fit through. The officer noted that he had never observed anything like that, but will continue to keep an eye out for it. He suggested that the residents call CPD if they ever see such an issue.

TPAC concurred with the findings and follow-up actions of staff and TOC.

e. Referral to TOC and TPAC from City Council regarding a resident concern with intersection sight lines on the Thorndike Street approach to South Street

At issue is a resident concern that it is difficult to turn left out of Thorndike Street onto South Street southbound due to restricted sight lines to the left of northbound-approaching South Street traffic. It was felt that because of on-street parking along South Street, Thorndike Street drivers had to pull well forward into South Street in order to see approaching northbound traffic. The resident also felt that the bump-out at the intersection crosswalk might be contributory to this problem.

Engineering visited the intersection and found that reasonable sight lines were available. The crosswalk bump-out on the south leg of the intersection actually enhances the sight line to the left more so than at most other downtown intersections where on-street parking is allowed within 20 to 30 feet of the side street. In this case, the bump-out sets back South Street parking about 60 feet from Thorndike Street resulting in better potential sight lines. These sight lines would be from a Thorndike vehicle pulled up to the edge of the travel way on South Street, not back at the stop line which is set back considerably from South Street due to the crosswalk and stop sign locations.

The perceived sight-line interference here is typical across the city where on-street parking occurs. The Ordinance generally prohibits parking within 20 feet of an intersection and 30 feet from a stop sign. Because of crosswalks and the need to locate stop signs, stop lines are often painted well back from the through street, and certainly in advance of any crosswalks. The Concord Police Department advises that per the rules of the road, drivers must first stop at a stop sign or stop line, then proceed carefully forward to where they can safely see approaching traffic so that they can judge when it's safe to enter or cross the through street. The 'through street' is considered as the edge of the travel-way, or in this case the projected white edge line along South Street, which is well past the stop line painted on Thorndike Street. While this may seem intuitive to most, we still get occasional concerns from drivers that they can't see because they feel the stop lines are too far back from the cross street.

At its September 18, 2018 meeting, TOC attendees concurred that the current intersection configuration was reasonable and that appropriate sight lines were available with proper driver action. TPAC also concurred with these findings and accepted staff's draft report of same for submission to City Council (Motion-Todd; Second-Zakre; Unanimous).

Unrelated to the referral's concern on the sight line to the south, a TPAC attendee suggested that on occasion, a vehicle will park in front of South Street Market (20-minute time limit) very close to Thorndike Street making a difficult sight line to the right for vehicles turning out of Thorndike Street. Staff noted that the Ordinance requires that parked vehicles must be at least 20 feet from the near edge of a minor cross street such as Thorndike Street. A sign indicating this setback (i.e. No Parking Here to Corner) is optional but not posted here. Staff will investigate the potential to place such a sign here with Parking Enforcement.

f. Referral to TOC and TPAC from City Council regarding a resident concern with intersection sight lines on the Pearl Street approach to N. State

At issue is a concern that on-street parking along the east side of N. State Street is too close to Pearl Street and impedes the sight lines for Pearl Street vehicles turning out onto N. State Street. Engineering staff visited the intersection and while the sight lines appeared to be appropriate, the 'No Parking Here To Corner' signs posted on the east side of N. State Street were not located far enough from Pearl Street per the Ordinance which specifies no parking within 40 feet north and 50 feet south

of Pearl Street. General Services promptly put in a dig-safe order and the signs were located 10 to 20 feet further back on September 28, 2018. This additional sign setback should improve the perceived sight lines from Pearl Street.

The perceived sight-line interference here is typical across the city where on-street parking occurs. The Ordinance generally prohibits parking within 20 feet of an intersection and 30 feet from a stop sign, which had been the case at the subject intersection. Because of crosswalks and the need to locate stop signs, stop lines are often painted well back from the through street, and certainly in advance of any crosswalks. The Concord Police Department advises that per the rules of the road, drivers must first stop at a stop sign or stop line, then proceed carefully forward to where they can safely see approaching traffic so that they can judge when it's safe to enter or cross the through street. The 'through street' is considered as the edge of the travel-way, or in this case the projected white edge line along N. State Street, which is well past the stop line painted on Pearl Street. While this may seem intuitive to most, we still get occasional concerns from drivers that they can't see because they feel the stop lines are too far back from the cross street.

TPAC concurred with staff response to this inquiry and accepted staff's draft report of same for submission to City Council (Motion-Todd; Second-Zakre; Unanimous).

10. Status Report on Subcommittees

a. Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (TPAC-BP), Craig Tufts

Craig Tufts reported that TPAC-BP met this month and continued planning for a potential buffered bike-lane demonstration project. A location being considered is along South Street between Pillsbury Street and the school campus. Select projects are also being considered that might be advanced conceptually by the committee to the point of being readily adaptable to a TAP or other grant application opportunity when it arises, including: bump-outs at select Broadway and Green Street intersections; potential sidewalk on Borough Road; and bike lane enhancements along Loudon Road up Gully Hill. The committee reviewed several site plans that are before the Planning Board. Members also discussed several bike-share/dock-less demonstration programs ongoing in several NH communities. Several members of the committee and city staff attended the NH complete streets conference last week.

b. Public Transportation Committee (TPAC-PT), Sheila Zakre

Sheila Zakre reported that TPAC-PT met last week. Chuck Willing from the City's Energy and Conservation Committee was in attendance and described his committee's efforts to forge a city goal to strive for non-fossil fuel alternatives for electric energy by 2030 and transportation/heating energy by 2050. His committee hopes to have a draft plan developed by the end of the year with public input sought by next summer. It was suggested that TPAC consider formal support of such a goal. The Chair advised that a decision by TPAC is not necessary at this time and that further input from the Energy and Conservations would be welcome as their plan becomes better defined. Further discussion was tabled.

The NHDOT's CAT Bus Service Study is ongoing, with consultant RLS in the process of developing potential modifications to CAT bus routes based on updated demographics and public input compiled earlier this year. Rob Mack gave an overview for TPAC attendees of RLS's preliminary route alignment concepts and alternatives that are currently being studied and refined.

c. Traffic Operations Committee (TOC), Rob Mack

Rob Mack reported that TOC did not meet in October. In September, TOC considered the six referrals in Item 9 above.

11. Staff Updates

a. Merrimack River Greenway Trail (CIP 543)

Greg Bakos noted that the design team is working with Land and Water Conservation Trust staff to consider options of repurposing current grant funds to provide additional trail improvements in Terrill Park rather than on the initial boardwalk section. A grant extension will also be required by January 1, 2019 when the current grant is set to expire. A walk of the Pan Am rail alignment from Horseshoe Pond northerly to the Northern Rail Trail terminus in Boscawen has been arranged for this Thursday and Saturday. Several attendees planned to attend.

b. I-93 Bow-Concord / Storrs Street Extension North

Rob Mack noted that the NHDOT's next public hearing on the I-93 Bow-Concord project has been scheduled for Wednesday, November 14, 2018. The hearing will include the latest Preferred Alternative plans, as well as the environmental documentation for the project. A comment period will follow for several weeks. Several attendees planned to attend the hearing. It was noted that TPAC will next meet the day after this hearing and would have the opportunity for further discussion of the project. The Chair has been compiling a list of significant trail projects that have been funded and constructed as part of major Federal-aid highway projects in other states. He would like to continue to explore the possibility of the NHDOT project including construction of portions of the MRGT within the I-93 Bow-Concord project corridor as a multimodal transportation enhancement of the overall project.

c. Langley Parkway Phase 3 (CIP40)

No report.

12. Other Discussion Items

Staff noted that TPAC has on occasion responded to staff requests for transportation-related overview of select Planning Board applications, such as the Pleasant Street Rezoning Request. At issue is a concern that the Ordinance creating TPAC only provides for TPAC being advisory to City Council. After some discussion, TPAC attendees concurred that the intent of the wording in the Ordinance should be further explored, although attendees felt that staff, Planning Board and others have greatly appreciated TPAC overview and opinion in the past. The Chair requested that staff explore the issue with Administration and report back next month for further TPAC discussion.

13. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at about 9:15 PM.

Upcoming Meeting Dates: November 15, 2018
 December 20, 2018
 January 24, 2019