



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

MINUTES

Transportation Policy Advisory Committee

January 24, 2019, 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)
Craig Tufts (Bicycling Community)
Sheila Zakre (At-Large)
Ryan Buchanan (At-Large)
Greg Bakos (At-Large) - excused
Ursula Maldonado (Pedestrian and Trails Community)
Rebecca McWilliams (At-Large)
Jim Sudak (Public Transportation Representative)
Rob Mack, Traffic Engineer (City Manager's Designee)

Members Absent:

Rob Werner (Council Representative) - excused

Staff and Guests:

Dave Cedarholm (City Engineer)
Sam Durfee (Senior Planner)
Mayor Jim Bouley
Linda Dianis (Resident)

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order with introductions of all attendees.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 25, 2018 meeting were approved (Motion-Zakre; Second-Bakos; Unanimous). The minutes of the November 15, 2018 meeting were approved (Motion-Maldonado; Second-Sudak; 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 - November 5 and December 3, 2018; Public Transportation – October 16, 2018; and Traffic Operations – November 20, 2018.

8. City Council Meeting Update

Councilor Todd reported that at its January 14, 2019 meeting, City Council accepted \$61,428 in grant funding from the NH Highway Safety Agency for road safety initiatives by the Concord Police Department. Funded initiatives include: STEP Patrols, Operation Safe Commute, Join the NH Clique, Distracted Driving Patrols, Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety Patrols and DWI/OUI Driver Patrols. A City in-kind grant match of \$15,357 is based on a dollar amount of the resources that the City will be providing toward these patrols throughout the grant period.

9. TPAC Referrals from City Council, Staff and Chair

a. Referral from City Council regarding a communication from Councilor Werner on Kensington Road residents' concerns about cut-through traffic and speeds on Kensington Road

At issue is a concern by five residents of Kensington Road on cut-through traffic and traffic speeds. Some traffic that otherwise should be using Pleasant Street for east-west travel to from the regional medical campus area chooses to cut through the Upper School Street neighborhood to avoid delays at the Pleasant/Warren/Fruit intersection. Of concern is the cut-through traffic that then uses Kensington Road as a link between School Street and Pleasant Street. Requested for consideration are: restricting left turns from Pleasant Street onto Kensington Road; installing corner bump-outs at the Kensington Road approach to School Street to slow turning traffic; and improving the Pleasant/Warren/Fruit intersection to reduce traffic delays and hence attract traffic from otherwise using Kensington Street.

Rob Mack summarized prior TOC and TPAC consideration of a similar request from Kensington Road residents back in 2007 and 2008. That consideration included several neighborhood meetings, traffic data collection efforts, consideration of various traffic restrictions to deter through-traffic (i.e. left-turn restrictions, speed bumps, one-way streets, intersection improvements at the Pleasant/Warren/Fruit intersection); and potential benefits of Langley Parkway Phase 2 and 3. TOC and TPAC findings and recommendations were outlined in a December 15, 2008 report to City Council and included:

- Implement lane-use and signal timing changes at the Pleasant/Warren/Fruit intersection to improve capacity and reduce delays. *(Follow-up: Following diversion of substantial medical campus traffic to the new Langley Parkway Phase 2 connection to Clinton Street in July 2008, lane use and timing changes were made to the subject intersection in April 2009. Intersection delays and peak period queuing were substantially reduced).*
- Observe traffic operation in the Upper School Street area following the above changes. *(Follow-up: when the neighborhood's cut-through traffic concerns first came forward in 2008, there were 3,900 daily vehicles using School Street east of N. Fruit Street. An April 2016 traffic count at this same location indicated a substantially-reduced volume of about 2,900 weekday vehicles. But Upper School Street neighborhood streets are still used by some east-west traffic to/from the hospital campus and the high school campus in order to avoid delays along Pleasant Street near the high school).*
- If above-noted cut-through traffic reductions were not considered reasonable, further consideration of left-turn prohibitions on Pleasant Street might be considered through the

city's Traffic Management Policy. *(Follow-up: Additional options were discussed with the Upper School Street neighborhood at a September 1, 2009 neighborhood meeting. There was no consensus on the implementation or not of select turn restrictions at that meeting, and the initial request for restrictions from Kensington Road residents was dropped in the following months. There was, however, a consensus of neighborhood attendees that Langley Parkway Phase 3 was a good long-term solution to the cut-through problem).*

- Staff would coordinate with Concord School District to pursue options that enhance traffic flow in the vicinity of the high school during school peaks. *(Follow-up: A comprehensive plan for bump-outs and other crosswalk and parking improvements was developed in the following years and constructed in 2018. Staff also prepared a conceptual design study for intersection improvements in 2013-14 which resulted in programming of CIP570, a full intersection reconstruction in a future year following Langley Parkway Phase 3 (CIP40).*
- Continue support for the planning, design and construction of Langley Parkway Phase 3 as a priority project. *(Follow-up: TOC and TPAC have been supportive of this project. The City prepared a conceptual design study for the project corridor in 2013-14. In an April 27, 2018 report to City Council, TPAC indicated its continued, strong endorsement of this project as a high-priority project for the FY 2019-2028CIP).*

Linda Dianis, resident of Kensington Street related the neighbors' concerns on cut-through traffic and speeds. She felt that since last year's repaving and curb construction along Kensington Street, speeds seemed to increase and the street seems narrower. She was not familiar with the neighborhood request of 2008 and corresponding TOC/TPAC considerations. She felt that the next phase of Langley Parkway would probably help the situation in the long run, but for now, she felt that left-turns from Pleasant Street into Kensington Street should be prohibited and that this traffic could otherwise use Rum Hill Road which she felt was wider and had fewer homes. The Chair noted that such a proposal would need to be considered by the entire neighborhood per the city's Traffic Management Policy, and that neighbors on adjacent street might voice different opinions.

Rob Mack noted that TOC discussed this referral at its January 15, 2019 meeting and expressed concerns regarding potential traffic restrictions discussed with the neighborhood in the past such as left-turn restrictions and one-way streets. Only having these restrictions on Kensington Road would divert cut-through as well as some neighborhood traffic to the other three side streets (Rum Hill Road, Pleasant View Avenue and Minot Street), increasing the negative effects of traffic there. As a consequence, such measures would, in all fairness, need to be applied equally to each of these streets. These restrictions can certainly force cut-through (as well as some neighborhood traffic) traffic back onto Pleasant Street and through the signalized Pleasant/Warren/Fruit intersection. However, the signalized intersection is close to capacity as evidenced by the long traffic queues and delays during peak periods; only major intersection reconstruction/enlargement and/or Langley Parkway Phase 3 can improve that. Until these improvements occur, the signalized intersection will bear the continued increase in traffic as has occurred over the last ten years, including the pending opening of the new 150,000 sf medical office building on the hospital campus. The additional and significant traffic increase due to potential neighborhood street restrictions which would divert cut-through traffic as well as some neighborhood traffic to this same over-capacity intersection and would act to accelerate the breakdown of intersection operations, increasing queues and delays even more. Of particular concern is: the location of this key intersection along the sole regional access route to the medical center for traffic from the north and east (potential for impacts to emergency response vehicle access); and the location of Concord High School on Warren Street which would also bear the burden resulting from increased traffic loads and intersection delays mixing with heavy pedestrian flows.

The Chair concurred with the above-noted traffic effects of restricting Pleasant Street vehicle access at the Upper School Street neighborhood streets. He noted his past observations of extremely long

eastbound delays on Pleasant Street in the afternoon during snow events. Eastbound commuter traffic on Pleasant Street would avoid left turns into the neighborhood side streets due to slippery uphill conditions. The result of all eastbound traffic staying on Pleasant Street and concentrating at the signalized high school intersection was a profound eastbound backup beyond the hospital campus.

Attendees discussed the substantial growth in traffic along Pleasant Street in the vicinity of the regional medical campus. The city had placed a moratorium on further development along that segment of the corridor several years ago until the hospital constructed its second signalized access driveway at the east end of the campus. While traffic operational challenges still need to be addressed, the importance of the regional medical campus to Concord's economy and well-being was stressed. The potential for Transportation Demand management measures was also suggested, including potential for remote, off-site campus parking (say near the interstate highways) and using a shuttle service. TPAC members noted the importance of Langley Parkway Phase 3 as the appropriate long-term solution to traffic accessibility in this part of the city.

Staff noted that speed studies conducted on Kensington Road over the last decade indicated average speeds of about 26 mph and 85th percentile speeds of about 31 mph. Staff will plan to recheck traffic speeds and volumes on Kensington Road in the coming months after snow season ends and coordinate findings with the police department. Staff would again examine some of the traffic restrictions requested by the neighborhood, and with particular regard to traffic operations near the high school as well as at the signalized Pleasant/Warren/Fruit intersection. Findings would be further discussed at the next TPAC meeting.

b. Referral from City Council regarding a communication from Councilor Bouchard on resident safety concerns about illegal vehicle left turns from East Side Drive northbound into the CVS/Burger King driveway

Rob Mack summarized TOC's discussion of this referral when it met last week. At issue is a growing and significant disregard for the posted No Left Turn restriction from East Side Drive northbound into the CVS driveway. This traffic movement was prohibited by signage as part of the approved CVS-Burger King site plan in 2011 for reasons of safety and traffic operations at the nearby signal at Loudon Road and East Side Drive. Safety concerns included the potential of vehicles turning left across two lanes of southbound stop-and-go traffic approaching the traffic signal. Operational concerns included vehicles potentially waiting to turn left due to signalized traffic queues while fully blocking East Side Drive northbound traffic, thus causing backups into the intersection at Loudon Road. Another operational concern was the potential for queued southbound vehicles on East Side Drive to stop and 'wave through' a left-turner instead of driving forward to the green light; the signal, detecting the resulting gap in southbound vehicle flow, can terminate the green light, stranding those following vehicles until the next signal, compounding queue lengths and delays.

The conditional approval of the CVS/Burger King site plan provided for a driveway on East Side Drive configured to allow right turns in and out, left turns out, but no left turns in. At the time, staff expressed strong concerns about potential safety and operational impacts if the proposed driveway configuration and turn-restrictive signing failed to prevent illegal left turns. As such, the site developer provided the city with an optional design of a raised median that would fit within the painted median area as is currently painted on East Side Drive. A \$15,000 donation was provided to the City to install this median or other traffic control measure it might deem necessary should safety or operational issues arise in the ensuing years. Also part of the conditional approval, the developer would provide the city with three post-construction-year traffic studies that examined traffic counts and reported crashes.

Follow-up traffic studies were submitted in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Staff has also monitored safety and operations since the site opened in 2012. Regarding safety, there had not been a significant crash history at the subject driveway when last checked through 2015. Staff will request an updated crash

summary through the present from CPD. Regarding operational impacts, however, staff has observed increasing non-compliance of the left turn restriction with associated impacts to street traffic operations since the site opened in 2012. Counts sampled by staff indicated 883 illegal left turns in a 30-day period in June 2014 (about 29 violations per day). This number increased to 1,631 illegal left turns in a 30-day period ending on December 9, 2017 (about 54 violations per day). CPD has indicated exasperation at the sheer number and frequency of violations over the years in spite of its substantial enforcement efforts. At the request of CPD, staff's placement of additional No Left Turn and Do Not Enter signage (totaling 5 signs for this driveway facing northbound traffic) in September 2017 had little reported effect on violations as can be seen in the number of violations recorded in December, 2017.

Operational issues were apparent in a video clip taken September 20, 2017 by GSD staff from a vehicle turning left from Loudon Road eastbound onto East Side Drive northbound. Coming to a stop while turning, a standing line of several turning vehicles ahead of them were blocked from continuing northbound on East Side Drive by a CVS semi-tractor trailer attempting to make the subject illegal left turn. The truck could not turn left due to the standing two-lane queues of opposing East Side Drive southbound traffic waiting for the light to change. Eventually this traffic leaves a gap for the truck driver who proceeds to make the illegal turn into the 'one-way exit' side of the CVS driveway. Staff noted that during the site-design process (planning board review) that large delivery trucks were intended to access the site via the Loudon Road driveway and a raised truck apron area between the CVS and the Burger King sites. TOC is also concerned that ongoing disregard for this turn restriction has continued to grow as more and more drivers see violations and feel it's acceptable for them to do the same. This can foster a driver disregard for similar traffic control devices elsewhere in the city.

A copy of the developer's raised-median plan was reviewed by attendees. The plan would physically and substantially restrict left turns at the subject CVS driveway. All of the 'illegal left turns' into the site would alternatively be made at the CVS's Loudon Road site driveway, as was the intention of the site's original design. Raised median would, however, preclude the current left turn out of the CVS driveway onto East Side Drive northbound. While this was noted by the developer to be a minor movement, its restriction would require CVS patrons to either revise the time of their visit so as to avoid the left exit (i.e. shop at CVS at the beginning of trip with a right in and right out at this driveway, as opposed to stopping at CVS on the way home by turning left into the driveway and then exiting left out), or turn right onto Loudon Road and circle back to East Side Drive northbound via Hazen Drive or Burns Avenue. The potential raised median extends roughly to the driveway of the Red Apple restaurant and could impact some driveway traffic there. An option could be to relocate the Red Apple driveway to the northerly end of their parking area, a location that would provide easier customer access to East Side Drive as well as put their circulating traffic along the back of their parking area instead of next to the building where patron walkers are concentrated.

TOC indicated its continued support for the installation of raised median at this location at its January 15, 2019 meeting. TPAC attendees acknowledged the operational and safety issues discussed thus far and did not object to the further consideration of the raised median option. Engineering staff will gather additional feedback from CPD on the issue, and will further refine the design of a potential median installation.

10. Status Report on Subcommittees

a. Traffic Operations Committee (TOC), Rob Mack

Rob Mack reported that TOC met last week and discussed referrals 9.a and 9.b, above. TOC also discussed a housekeeping item related to the city's designated streets for truck use, an Ordinance based list. At issue is the formal inclusion to this list of Regional Drive (opened in 2004) and Langley Parkway (opened in 2008). The Chair requested that the item be further discussed by TPAC at the next meeting, including an overview of this particular Ordinance and related map of the routes.

