

## City Manager's Message – January 18, 2015

I look forward to the start of a new year and the opportunities it brings. We are fortunate to have so many plans, projects and programs designed to improve the quality of life in Birmingham and I welcome the opportunity to continue sharing what is happening in these areas.

Currently, the common question I hear is “What’s happening with West Maple Road?” To best explain what’s being discussed for West Maple, I must first explain the City’s Multi-Modal Transportation Plan and how it promotes a detailed review of our future road improvements, of which West Maple is the latest road to begin this review process.



Joseph A. Valentine, City Manager

The City’s multi-modal transportation efforts began in 2013 with the adoption of a Multi-Modal Transportation Plan as a means to review scheduled road improvements while considering overall mobility during the design review phase of the project. This effort was initiated in order to comply with Michigan Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration best practices for addressing mobility improvements. To facilitate this effort, a Multi-Modal Transportation Board (MMTB) was established in 2014 to review all transportation related projects in the City going forward. The MMTB’s role in the design review phase is to consider elements of the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan, as well as, reviewing data and information specific to a project while providing a forum for public input. The overall goal is to ensure that all projects will improve the quality of the transportation system for all users, ages and abilities, as practical.

In 2014, the MMTB reviewed eight road projects, five of which were specifically listed in the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan. In preparation for the 2016 construction season the MMTB will begin reviewing projects now, the first of which is the largest project - West Maple Road from Cranbrook to Southfield.

With the history of how and why the City established its multi-modal efforts, the explanation for what’s happening with West Maple Road becomes clearer given its relation to this process. The City has a strong public process for reviewing projects and that is strengthened with the reviews by the MMTB for public road improvements. Because West Maple Road is now beginning its review for next year’s construction season, concerns have arisen about some of the elements proposed by the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan.

There is a section of the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan that outlines proposed modifications for West Maple Road that will be the subject of review in the coming months. Those items specifically proposed for review under the plan include relocating bus stops closer to pedestrian road crossings, installing islands to facilitate safer road crossings and converting the four lane roadway into a three lane roadway with a center turn lane and accompanying bike lanes along its edge, among other items. The element for converting Maple Road from four lanes to three lanes has received the most attention.

Whether there is support or opposition to any of the proposed elements to be reviewed, the process for considering each of them still needs to occur in order to review the data and take into account all relevant information towards developing recommendations on how to proceed. It is this public process that has served the City so well in determining how to progress. The recent concerns received for West Maple have been shared with the MMTB as they begin their review and consider all data and information in order to conduct a full review. This practice of conducting public reviews to study issues has been a staple of how Birmingham operates and is even reiterated in the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan by advising that prior to proceeding with any elements of the plan further study should be done.

To help address the concerns presented at the start of their review of West Maple Road, the MMTB recently adopted the creation of a steering committee to help facilitate stakeholder input, assist in the review of data and offer additional input during the review process. Nothing has been predetermined at this time and recommendations will be coming at the conclusion of the review process by the MMTB. At this point, we ask everyone to keep an open mind as the information is reviewed relative to any road enhancements for West Maple Road. More information and updates on the meetings for the MMTB can be found on the City's website at [www.bhamgov.org/multimodal](http://www.bhamgov.org/multimodal).

I look forward to continuing to share more about Birmingham's key issues in the future.