**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2019**
**City Commission Room**
**151 Martin Street, Birmingham, Michigan**

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Multi-Modal Transportation Board held Thursday, May 2, 2019.

Chairwoman Johanna Slanga convened the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chairwoman Johanna Slanga, Vice-Chairwoman Lara Edwards; Board Members Daniel Rontal, Doug White; Alternate Board Member Daniel Isaksen; Student Representatives Chris Capone, Bennett Pompi

**Absent:** Board Members Amy Folberg, Katie Schafer, Joe Zane

**Administration:** Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Scott Grewe, Police Commander
Paul O'Meara, City Engineer
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist
**Austin Fletcher, City Engineer**

**Fleis & Vanderbrink ("F&V")**:
Julie Kroll

**Regional Transit Authority:**
Ben Stupka

**SMART**:
Robert Kramer

**MKSK**:
Brad Strader

**2. Introductions** (none)

**3. Review Agenda** (no change)

**4. Approval of MMTB Minutes of March 7, 2019**

**Motion by Mr. White**
**Seconded by Dr. Rontal to approve the MMTB Minutes of March 7, 2019 as presented.**

**Motion carried, 5-0.**

VOICE VOTE
Yeas: White, Rontal, Slanga, Edwards, Isaksen
Nays: None

**5. Willits / Oakland and S. Old Woodward – Pedestrian Improvements**

Assistant Planner Lauren Chapman presented the item.

City Engineer O'Meara stated that the Commission wanted the MMTB to study this intersection in terms of potential pedestrian improvements that could be made.

Vice-Chairwoman Edwards asked about potential changes in signal timing.

Ms. Kroll explained:

- There are leading pedestrian intervals (LPI) at this intersection, with a 10 second leading pedestrian interval for east-west crossing and a seven second leading pedestrian interval for north-south.
- The permissive protected left turn at this intersection is different from other Birmingham intersections. If a driver is trying to make a left turn on Willits to go north on Old Woodward, the driver would proceed with a protected green arrow requiring pedestrians to yield to the vehicle. When this light goes to red, the east-west LPI begins.
- At this point, there are often cars in the intersection because they expected the signal to turn into a flashing yellow arrow while it actually turns to a solid red. This leads to east-west pedestrian hesitation because they both see cars in the middle of the road and have a walk signal.
- There were some pedestrian-vehicle conflicts on the north side of the intersection, but the majority of pedestrians cross this intersection on the south side.
- A lagging left turn was evaluated as a possible solution, which would have had the 10 second LPI, followed by a flashing yellow, followed by a solid green. This configuration would have caused longer back-ups in the intersection.
- The F&V team then decided to focus on altering signal timing to make the biggest improvement, with the intention of improving specific parts of the intersection even further after that.

- This intersection is most challenging between 5:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. on weekdays. The rest of the time it works well. At this time the team is considering altering the signal timing during the peak 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. timeframe, while leaving the LPIs intact other hours of the day.
- The various options available for improving the intersection are still being studied.
- When the bus stops at the stop adjacent the intersection, its latter half will remain in the intersection, effectively blocking part of the intersection.

City Engineer O'Meara concurred. He said that they are currently considering removing 10 feet from the northbound lane in order to provide enough room for the bus to sit and for traffic to pass. He said recommendations for how to update the signal timing would be available for the June 2019 meeting.

Mr. Isaksen suggested taking the hashed triangular wedge divider on southbound Old Woodward between the right turn lane and the straight traffic, removing ten feet, and creating a 60 foot crossing, which would be more tenable.

Dr. Rontal spoke in favor of that suggestion.

Mr. Isaksen said bump-outs are a great idea here.

Chairwoman Slanga noted that these were ideas for the future.

Vice-Chairwoman Edwards noted there was a lot of room on Oakland due to the current hashing as well, said she saw a lot of room for future improvements, and said she looked forward to hearing the signal timing recommendations.

**6. 2019 Asphalt Resurfacing Program**

City Engineer O'Meara presented the item.

Vice-Chairwoman Edwards said it would be good to have a survey regarding the bicycle connector route on the City website.

Dr. Rontal said increased signage designating the bicycle connector route would be beneficial. He also said he would like to see further plans for encouraging use and implementation of the bicycle connector route. He said he lives near the route as it passes through Emmonds, Catalpa, and Southlawn, and that there is no signage encouraging use of the route and notifying cyclists to its existence.

Planning Director Ecker said the improvements Dr. Rontal was talking about are part of phase two of the multi-modal plan, and that it will be addressed towards the beginning of that phase. For the building, painting, and signage, that would need to be included in the budget, the opportunity for which occurs annually. She said it would go in the Engineering budget.

City Engineer O'Meara said the budget request would be better phased over a few years, as opposed to in one year.

Chairwoman Slanga, summarizing the Board's views and concerns, asked Staff to come up with a recommended plan for implementation of all the bicycle information in the Multi-Modal Plan, and possibly a loose schedule.

City Engineer O'Meara emphasizes that Staff would want the Board's feedback on the pending bicycle recommendations as well in order to determine where the priorities are.

**7. Board Training – Transit Oriented Development**

Brad Strader from MKSK, Ben Stupka from the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), and Robert Kramer from SMART spoke to the Board. Mr. Kramer spoke on SMART service, the regular routes, and the FAST service. Mr. Strader spoke about transit-oriented development (TOD), some examples of TOD, and how it relates to Birmingham such as how development, design, and density effect the viability of different types of transit. Mr. Stupka talked about the change from TOD to mobility-oriented development.

Mr. Kramer, Deputy General Manager at SMART, reviewed the routes that pass through Birmingham. He explained that the FAST bus serves communities with more use and investment in the service, and skips other communities that have not invested in the service in order to provide a higher quality of service overall. Birmingham will be getting enhanced FAST bus shelters that will have 'Next Bus Arrival' screens, and more substantial financial investment in those stops. Focusing investment along nodes that are transit supportive has been successful, with the utilization of the FAST Woodward line up 50% over the year prior. Some of the ways SMART would alter its service in order to be more supportive of TOD are:

- Altering the routes in small ways in order to pass through more densely populated areas with more walkable amenities, which will generate increased ridership and in turn generate more walkable, dense development.
- Increasing the comfort provided at the stops, including the example of the 'Next Bus Arrival' screens at the FAST shelters.
- Expanding or shortening routes in order to better accommodate the locations of higher demand.

Mr. Kramer continued:

- SMART is currently undergoing operations analysis to determine how best to connect riders to the major routes.
- The service quality of some of the minor routes may not be ideal, he also noted that sometimes those minor routes are the only ways people in those areas have to get around, so route changes are being considered with great caution.
- Increasing the accessibility and rider volume of the major routes can be an engine of economic and walkable development in the areas those routes pass through.
- The aim is to redeploy SMART's resources to increase bus frequency on more heavily used routes, and to use other resources to keep bus accessibility open for people who rely significantly on what were previously lower-quality routes.
- Adding more frequent buses to the most commonly used routes will also be supportive of

TOD.

- SMART is working with MDOT to develop signal priority implementation which would include connected vehicle infrastructure. This would allow green lights to stay green longer or turn green earlier if a bus is running behind schedule.
- SMART is looking at constructing Park-and-Ride facilities along the FAST corridors, which he conceded is somewhat opposite to TOD but still supports a better level of service.
- SMART is also looking for ways to collaborate with other transit businesses and models in the area, such as ride-sharing, as well.
- It takes about 40 minutes to get from Birmingham to Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit. The FAST service is about 15% faster than the local service. It ends up being about 5-7 minutes longer than driving.
- SMART and DDOT unveiled a unified payment system called DART on May 1, 2019, allowing for passes of 4-hour, 24-hour, 7-day and 31-day increments which would eliminate transfer charges and streamline fare options.
- SMART has found Birmingham is very responsive to bus-related suggestions, and that there is an open line to the City. SMART works on demarcating bus stops clearly and locating them in locations that are as safe for pedestrians as possible.

Planning Director Ecker noted that SMART has also been very responsive to Birmingham's requests about topics such as bus shelter customization or similar matters.

Brad Strader from MKSK defined TOD as development that typically is very pedestrian-, transit-, and bicycle-oriented, and less car oriented. It is typically mixed-use and higher density so that the local transit is used throughout the day, instead of only during rush hour, for instance. He continued:

- Maintaining a mixture of uses along the transit line is good in addition to maintaining mixed-use developments in single spots along the transit line.
- Reduction in parking needs have been more subtle than some planners anticipated because people prefer the flexibility of having a car, but TOD does yield some reduction in parking necessity.
- Some of the benefits include more transit options for younger individuals and independent seniors looking for alternatives to single occupant vehicles and development closer to high-quality transit has a higher value. While the tendency towards higher property values near TOD is more true in larger urban areas, the trend is also starting to appear in parts of Michigan as well.
- TOD depends on a municipality's transit-oriented goals. Some of the possible reasons for TOD include building ridership, economic development, creating higher density living which can reduce both housing and transportation costs, getting people healthier through walking and bicycling, and shifting the primary transit modalities used.
- TOD can vary depending on the type of roadway, type of development, and type of community.
- TOD requires many stakeholders to be involved from both the public and private sectors. Developers need to see that there is a return on investment, and might be hesitant to do TOD if they anticipate a stop or station might move in a year. Birmingham would need to work with MDOT to make changes in the MDOT right of way and with transit agencies like the RTA and SMART to create viable TOD.
- Mr. Stupka has been able to meet with developers in his RTA capacity to explain, for instance, how developments can meet the needs of major employers and make using

transit more convenient for the employees.

- Factors which influence transit usage include proximity, convenience, quality of the bus stop and amenities, travel time reliability, and the permanence of a stop or station.
- Fast bus services encourage more TOD than a regular bus line, bus rapid transit or exclusive bus lanes encourage more TOD than fast bus services, street car encourages more TOD than bus rapid transit. Commuter rail can vary from a purely park-and-ride situation to the impetus for a lot of development.
- One way of approaching TOD is determining objectives, coming up with a plan to be implemented over a period of time, looking at code and development issues, and continuing to enhance transit as density and quality of development increases.
- The Woodward Avenue Action Association (WA3) has been an advocate in the local area towards encouraging TOD along Woodward.

Mr. Strader then reviewed a number of case studies, and advised the Board that Planning Director Ecker had the presentation should Board Members want to review those examples further.

Planning Director Ecker said that Cleveland's TOD was a particularly compelling example to compare to Birmingham, and that in some areas along its recent transit development it looked strikingly like the Woodward Corridor.

Ben Stupka from RTA explained that mobility-oriented development (MOD) explores how different modes of transportation access the major transit corridors and how development fits into that. The RTA is currently developing a study looking at MOD along Woodward and along the Ann Arbor-Detroit Rail Corridor. He continued that the RTA is also looking at some potential pilots to parlay some of its resources into an Uber- or Lyft-style on-demand service for individuals living in the lower density areas.

In reply to Planning Director Ecker's question, Mr. Stupka explained that the RTA is working on regional transit via considering another ballot initiative in 2020 and renewing its master plan to determine what the values and priorities are around regional transit. Determining the ideals and values around regional transit allows the RTA to inspire people, maintain flexibility, accommodate different funding outcomes, and better incorporate stakeholders' objectives. The RTA is also working on its coordinated service plan for seniors and people with disabilities, which would allow on-demand services for qualifying people under the ADA. There are over 100 non-profits, community services, and other providers in the region offering similar resources to seniors and disabled people, and the RTA is trying to figure out how to better coordinate those efforts. Newer technologies for fare-paying across transit are also being explored. MDOT also gave the RTA a grant to work on centralizing booking for ADA services.

Chairwoman Slanga said she looked forward to further hearing about how Birmingham's planning decisions could better connect the City with the surrounding communities. She then thanked Mr. Kramer, Mr. Strader, and Mr. Stupka for their presentations.

Planning Director Ecker thanked Mr. Kramer, Mr. Strader, and Mr. Stupka as well.

**8. Meeting Open to the Public for items not on the Agenda**

**9. Miscellaneous Communications**

City Engineer O'Meara explained a resident in the West Maple-Chesterfield area would like to see a crossing area in front of the First United Methodist Church, which previously went unendorsed by the MMTB and the Commission due to residents' comments at the public hearing requesting it not be installed.

City Engineer O'Meara said he was inclined to ask the resident in support of the crossing area for more positive feedback from residents before the MMTB would pursue the issue further.

**10. Next Meeting – June 6, 2019**

**11. Adjournment**
No further business being evident, the board members adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Jana Ecker, Planning Director

Paul O'Meara, City Engineer