

DRAFT

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Thursday, May 7, 2020
Held Virtually Via Zoom and Telephone Access

Minutes of the virtual regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Multi-Modal Transportation Board held Thursday, May 7, 2020.

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

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Chairwoman Johanna Slanga; Board Members Tom Peard, Katie Schafer, Doug White, Joe Zane; Alternate Board Member Andrew Haig

Absent: Board Member Daniel Rontal

Administration: Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Eric Brunck, IT Manager
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist
Austin Fletcher, Assistant City Engineer
Scott Grewe, Police Commander

Fleis & Vandenbrink (F&V):

Julie Kroll
Justin Rose

MKSK:

Ben Palevsky
Brad Strader

Chairwoman Slanga reviewed the appropriate parliamentary procedures for a virtual meeting. She thanked everyone for their participation and cooperation in advance.

2. Introductions

None.

3. Review Agenda

No changes.

4. Approval of MMTB Minutes of March 5, 2020

Motion by Mr. White

Seconded by Mr. Zane to approve the MMTB Minutes of March 5, 2020 as submitted.

Motion carried, 4-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: White, Zane, Peard, Slanga

Nays: None

Abstain: Schafer

5. Lincoln & Adams Signal Improvements

Planning Director Ecker introduced the item. Ms. Kroll and Mr. Rose reviewed the item.

In reply to Chairwoman Slanga, Mr. Rose stated that there will be an improvement for eastbound traffic crossing at Adams. He explained that westbound traffic would be stopped to allow eastbound traffic to continue and to make left turns. He also explained that the signal timing changes would have to flow naturally from the phasing changes.

Motion by Mr. Zane

Seconded by Mr. Peard to recommend the following:

- 1. The addition of a new protected left turn phase at the intersection of Lincoln and Adams Road to provide protected northbound left-turns and protected eastbound left-turns; and,**
- 2. The relocation of the no parking sign currently located at the start of the taper on Lincoln further east to the end of the existing taper to ensure that vehicles do not park in the taper lane.**

Motion carried, 5-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Zane, Peard, Schafer, Slanga, White

Nays: None

6. Brown Street Intersections Study

Commander Grewe reviewed the item.

In reply to Chairwoman Slanga, Ms. Kroll confirmed that the parking near this intersection does have an impact on sight distances primarily for northbound traffic. She explained that the majority of crashes in this intersection, however, resulted from southbound traffic. Noting that the parking near the intersection has been removed due to construction at this time, Ms. Kroll said she recommended that mitigation measures be implemented now as a trial period to see whether they have the desired effects. She said that if issues with the safety of this intersection remain that the conversation could be revisited at the conclusion of construction.

Chairwoman Slanga acknowledged the public present and invited comment.

Julie Hertzberg stated that she lives at the intersection of Bates and Brown, and summarized her concerns regarding the intersection as laid out in her March 1, 2020 email to Commander Grewe. She explained that if she and her family had been aware of the dangerousness of the intersection

they would have reconsidered moving there. She said she and her family hear short stops about seven to eight times daily stemming from the Brown-Bates intersection. Ms. Hertzberg stated that the great majority of traffic passing through the intersection does so at higher speeds than the legally mandated speed limit. She said that the existence of other four-way stops in the area have the effect of leading drivers to believe that Brown and Bates has a four-way stop as well, which she says contributes to the lack of safety at the intersection.

In reply to Chairwoman Slanga, Ms. Hertzberg said her preferred outcome would be the implementation of a four-way stop at Bates and Brown. She said that the flashing pedestrian beacons have also been helpful at other Birmingham intersections, and could be helpful at this one.

Michael Horowitz explained he and his wife Barbara live one house south on Bates from the Brown-Bates intersection. He stated he was corroborating all of Ms. Hertzberg's observations, stressing exactly how perilous the nearby residents feel the intersection is. He exhorted the MMTB to take as aggressive measures as possible to improve the safety at this intersection, and stated he was in support of Ms. Hertzberg's request for a four-way stop at Bates and Brown. He said that while the flashing pedestrian beacons could be useful for the pedestrians in the area, it would not increase the safety for vehicular traffic moving through the intersection.

Bill Koefoed explained he and his wife Nancy live two doors down on Brown from the intersection. He said that they live with a clear view of the Bates-Brown intersection, and that he had probably seen at least 15 to 20 pedestrians traversing that intersection since the present MMTB meeting began. He also echoed Ms. Hertzberg's concerns, confirming that vehicles proceed through the intersection well in excess of the posted speed limit. He mentioned that this is especially dangerous since the intersection is two blocks from the Baldwin Public Library and not much further from downtown, meaning that it is an intersection heavily used by pedestrians. He agreed with Ms. Hertzberg and Mr. Horowitz that a four-way stop would be his preferred solution, though he conceded that he and his family would rather have the flashing pedestrian beacons than nothing.

Seeing no further public discussion, Chairwoman Slanga returned the conversation to the MMTB.

Mr. Haig expressed his sympathy for the public's stated concerns, noting that he has two young children of his own. He said that the City should not be trying to further constrain the actions of speeding drivers who already choose to break the law. He said he could not think of a positive way to influence the actions of drivers who are either choosing not to pay attention or are just not paying attention at the intersection.

Mr. Zane said that while Mr. Haig's point was well-taken, there were a number of line-of-sight issues that could be remedied at the intersection that would make the intersection safer for both motorists and pedestrians. He said bringing the stop signs further forward on Brown would be one way of remedying some of the issues. He also noted that for most drivers there is a difference between driving in excess of the speed limit and running a stop sign. He said that adding stop signs to the Bates-Brown intersection could actually slow down the motorists who are not otherwise inclined to follow the posted speed limits.

Mr. Peard said Mr. Zane's point was well-stated. He noted that the lack of stop signs at the

intersections at Brown-Henrietta and Brown-Chester work together to create the dangerous conditions at the Bates-Brown intersection. He agreed with Mr. Zane that stop signs would act as a deterrent and would break up the otherwise steady flow of traffic through the Bates-Brown intersection. Mr. Peard said he also found it persuasive that families living near the intersection were asking for these stop signs since they would be the people stopping at the stop signs most frequently on their way to and from their homes. F&V's report indicated that one out of seven cars going through the Bates-Brown intersection is driving in excess of 30 m.p.h., and Mr. Peard said that clearly shows that the City needs to take the speeding problem at the intersection seriously.

Chairwoman Slanga said she had long has concerns about sight distances at the Bates-Brown intersection. She stated she was not convinced that moving the present signs within the intersection will result in the safety improvements the MMTB is seeking. She said that in her experience serving on both the City's previous Traffic and Safety Board and the MMTB, she has found that every time stop signs are added to an intersection motorists speed both both in their approach and their departure from the stop sign.

In reply to Chairwoman Slanga, Ms. Kroll reviewed the parts of the F&V report that explained why adding stop signs are not recommended for the Bates-Brown intersection, and what recommendations F&V was making for the intersection instead.

Dr. Schafer addressed the members of the public, saying that in both her capacity as the pedestrian advocate on the MMTB and as a pediatrician she was greatly concerned regarding the safety issues arising from Bates-Brown intersection. Acknowledging that it is counter-intuitive, she also confirmed Chairwoman Slanga's statement that adding stop signs to intersections increases speed on the approach and departure from the intersection. She said for this reason that adding stop signs to Bates-Brown would not be the right answer.

Mr. Strader explained that if the City installs stop signs at an intersection contrary to the warrants listed in the Michigan Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, then the City is opened up to more liability should an accident at that intersection occur.

Chairwoman Slanga returned the conversation to the public.

Ms. Hertzberg said that stop signs on Brown would force vehicles to stop before reaching the pedestrian crossings. She said that even if vehicles are speeding on Brown that the primary source of danger to pedestrians is the fact that the vehicles are not forced to stop before the crosswalks. She continued that the pedestrian beacon that has been at the intersection does not remain upright which means it is largely ineffective. Lastly, she said the bulk of the time she hears tires screeching from her home it results from motorists proceeding on Bates thinking that motorists on Brown are going to stop, and then discovering that they do not. She summarized for the MMTB an incident, laid out in her email, where a 12-year-old boy was almost killed by a vehicle that did not stop for him in the Brown-Bates crosswalk. The boy dove from his scooter when he realized the vehicle was not stopping and the approaching vehicle veered into the oncoming traffic lane at the last moment. She stressed for the MMTB that this was not an uncommon occurrence, and that someone stands to be gravely injured or killed at the Brown-Bates intersection if significant measures are not taken to improve its safety.

In reply to Dr. Schafer, Mr. Strader agreed that it might be worthwhile for the City's traffic consultants to review the entire corridor along Brown from Southfield to Old Woodward to improve the safety in the area. He said significant changes to the Bates-Brown intersection should not be implemented until Maple construction and the decrease in traffic due to the Covid-19 pandemic ends, which will allow for better study of the area.

Dr. Schafer said she would advocate for the MMTB implementing temporary measures to make the intersection safer, with a continued commitment to studying the Brown corridor for additional traffic calming changes that can be implemented to promote pedestrian safety.

In reply to Chairwoman Slanga, Mr. Strader said it would not take very long to conduct a study of the intersection once the conditions have returned to normal. He said MKSK and F&V can work on the study parameters now in order to have it ready to run as soon as it is appropriate.

Motion by Mr. Zane

Seconded by Dr. Schafer to, on a test basis, install "Cross Traffic Does Not Stop" on Henrietta, Bates and Chester at Brown and install additional "Pedestrian Crossing" signage at Henrietta, Bates and Chester to create a pedestrian gateway condition, with the understanding that the MMTB will generate a complete corridor plan for that stretch of Brown within the next few months.

Mr. Horowitz thanked the MMTB for taking the matter seriously and for their continued commitment to study that section of Brown. He said he would prefer that the flashing pedestrian beacons be included as part of the test conditions in the motion. He also said that removing parking from close to the intersection, while it can improve sightlines, would likely have the negative impact of making vehicles more likely to increase speeds. He said he finds that the parking has a somewhat traffic calming effect on the intersection.

Chairwoman Slanga explained that while the flashing pedestrian beacons is on a list of potential solutions, it is not a solution that can be implemented immediately since it requires electrical changes, funding, and other more extensive investment.

Mr. Koefoed said he wanted to express a sense of urgency to the MMTB since the current conditions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic are actually leading to more pedestrians using the intersection than usual. He said it would be even more important now to protect pedestrian safety as a result.

Ms. Hertzberg echoed Mr. Horowitz's statement that flashing pedestrian beacons would be a significant improvement to the intersection in lieu of the originally requested stop signs.

Motion carried, 6-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Zane, Schafer, Slanga, White, Haig, Peard

Nays: None

Chairwoman Slanga asked Mr. Strader, Ms. Kroll and Planning Director Ecker to return with more suggestions for improving the safety of the Brown corridor for the next MMTB meeting. She said

that the MMTB owed it to the Commission and the community to make recommendations for making Brown safer.

7. Signage for Scooter Use Downtown

Commander Grewe reviewed the item.

After MMTB discussion, it was decided that a dismount sign in the Lakewood, CO style should be installed around the Central Business District.

Motion by Mr. Zane

Seconded by Dr. Schafer to install dismount zone signage in the Lakewood, CO style in locations identified in the attached map of the Central Business District.

Motion carried, 6-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Zane, Schafer, Slanga, White, Peard, Haig

Nays: None

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

9. Miscellaneous Communications

10. Next Meeting – June 4, 2020

11. Adjournment

No further business being evident, the board members adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Jana Ecker, Planning Director

Austin Fletcher, Assistant City Engineer