

**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD
THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2017
City Commission Room
151 Martin Street, Birmingham, Michigan**

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Multi-Modal Transportation Board held Thursday, June 1, 2017.

Chairperson Vionna Adams convened the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Vionna Adams; Board Members Lara Edwards, Amy Folberg, Vice-Chairman Andy Lawson, Daniel Rontal, Johanna Slanga, Michael Surnow

Absent: None

Administration: Mark Clemence, Police Chief
Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Austin Fletcher, Asst. City Engineer
Scott Grewe, Operations Commander
Paul O'Meara, City Engineer
Lauren Chapman, Asst. City Planner

Also Present: Julie Kroll and Mike Labadie from Fleis & Vandenbrink ("F&V"), Transportation Engineering Consultants
Daniel Isaksen, Alternate Member
Katie Schaefer, Alternate Member

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Daniel Isaksen, new alternate board member.

3. REVIEW AGENDA (no change)

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES, MEETING OF MAY 4, 2017

Motion by Mr. Rontal

Seconded by Mr. Surnow to approve the Minutes of May 4, 2017 as presented.

Motion carried, 7-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Rontal, Surnow, Adams, Edwards, Folberg, Lawson, Slanga

Nays: None

Absent: None

5. S. ETON RD. - MAPLE RD. TO LINCOLN AVE.

The public hearing opened at 6:06 p.m.

Mr. O'Meara recalled that at the May, 2017 meeting, staff presented a new concept for S. Eton Rd. from Yosemite Blvd. to Lincoln Ave., generally proposing a two-way bike lane along the west side of the road, resulting in the removal of parking on this section. The board generally endorsed the plan, but made several suggestions for the block north of Villa Ave. Those changes were incorporated in a revised plan. A public hearing to present these ideas to the community was scheduled for the June 1, 2017 meeting and notices were sent to all owners and tenants within 300 ft. of the S. Eton Rd. corridor.

Mr. O'Meara's presentation covered three sections along S. Eton Rd.:

Maple Rd./S. Eton Rd. Intersection

The proposal was to add a raised island that would allow pedestrians to cross S. Eton Rd. at Maple Rd. with a break in the middle, along with other design features. The main adjustment, based on new information from users, was to change the northwest corner of the island and to move the left turn lane stop bar back where it is today. This allows large vehicles to make the turn from Maple Rd. onto S. Eton Rd.

Mr. Labadie said this scheme makes the intersection more controlled. He thought people would pay more attention and it would be safer for pedestrians.

Yosemite Blvd. to Villa Ave.

In this block there are businesses on both sides of the street. Last month the board came up with several suggestions, including eliminating parking on the southbound side; and narrowing the street so that the sidewalk would be 8 ft. wide on both sides and there would be room for a 4 ft. grass strip with trees on both sides. There would not be space for a bike lane but there would be sharrows. It is important that northbound bikes cross Eton Ave. at Villa Ave., where the sight distance is better.

Villa Ave. to Lincoln Ave.

It is proposed to remove parking on the southbound side and open up the space for a two-way bike corridor with a 1.5 ft. wide buffer area that would be

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supplemented with some form of raised markers. Bumpouts are suggested at Villa Ave., Hazel Ave., Bowers Ave., Cole Ave., and Lincoln Ave. It is cautioned that every time someone stops to make a left turn everyone else is stopping as well, Discussion considered that two bollards may be needed on the north end of the bike lane to force bikers to stop and get off. The south side is a little less busy.

At this time the chairperson opened up discussion from the public.

Mr. Michael Kopmeyer, 1351 Bennaville, thought the bike lane proposal trivializes bicycle travel. Bikes have a right to be on the road and they should be respected by automobile drivers and not be trivialized.

Mr. Terry Adams, Bob Adams Towing, 2499 Cole; and Mr. Brian Bolyard, Bolyard Lumber, 777 S. Eton, recited some issues that could occur with the proposed design on the corner. If the stop line on northbound Eton Rd. can be kept where it is, it would be a great plus for the corner. A stop bar closer to Maple Rd. would cause more of an issue with tractor-trailers. Mr. Adams indicated the majority of truck traffic will head west off of S. Eton Rd. because of the 13 ft. 2 in. bridge to the east. Mr. Bolyard noted 42 to 48 ft. combined length trailers need to turn off of S. Eton Rd. every day. Mr. Adams commented the overall length that he could tow is 78 ft. Mr. Labadie advised that you don't design for the one extreme situation. This plan will accommodate a WB 40, which means a 45 ft. long trailer tractor, and that encompasses most everything that goes through there today.

Ms. Ecker noted this board's job is to balance not just the automobile traffic, but all of the users. The point of looking at this intersection is to make it more friendly for all modes of travel. She hasn't seen any plans come across for the Rail District that would require large vehicles, other than during construction.

Mr. Andrew Haig, 1814 Banbury, thanked the board for proposing an island that would make it easier for pedestrians. However, he suggested removing the island, pulling the stop line back, and moving the crossing and lights further south, away from the intersection. For the bike lanes, raise the height of the road two or three inches overall, and perhaps add bollards.

Ms. Melanie Mansenior with Downriver Refrigeration, 925 S. Eton Rd. was worried about the amount of trucks going in and out of the S. Eton Rd./Maple Rd. intersection because that is the only ingress and egress for truck traffic through the Rail District. She received clarification that 30 to 40% of currently accessible parking on S. Eton Rd. will be eliminated. Ms. Ecker added a detailed parking study was done last year that indicated there is not a parking problem overall in that area. Ms. Mansenior replied that it will impact her particular location if the parking spots across the street are eliminated. Currently there not enough spots

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and people park in their lot. More people will do so if the spaces across the street are removed.

Ms. Ecker noted the board has to balance everyone's interests. They have heard repeatedly in the past from residents that that they want those spaces to go away because of concerns with site distance pulling in and out of their driveways along with being blocked in.

Ms. Cindy Cherum, 1622 S. Eton Rd., a member of the Ad Hoc Rail District Review Committee, wanted this group to remember that in this plan there is an entire side of S. Eton Rd. that has not been looked at. Mr. O'Meara responded that the board decided to focus on the section north of Lincoln Ave. first, and then study the area to the south.

Ms. Sherry Markus, 1382 Ruffner, expressed her confusion about why they would slow down the traffic so much and spend so much money for that pedestrian area. Presently traffic is backed up all the way to Coolidge in the evening. This plan will slow things down even more. Mr. Labadie advised the whole intersection and its access points will change. A recent study has concluded that delays on Maple Rd., even with the additional traffic from Whole Foods, should improve. There will be push buttons for pedestrians that will allow Maple Rd. to get more time.

In response to Ms. Markus, Ms. Ecker explained that over the last several years there have been many complaints about issues in this area. Crossings are not safe, traffic goes too fast, no one stops for pedestrians. Further, people have complained about sight distance, pulling in and out, about where trucks are parking, and where employees are parking. Therefore, the City Commission created the Ad Hoc Study Committee. The splitter island affords a safe haven for pedestrians when they are crossing the street.

Ms. Markus thought the bike lane is silly and goes nowhere. She observed that with parking on Cole St. cars cannot get through. It was discussed that everything in the plan has been designed specifically to slow traffic along S. Eton Rd. Dr. Rontal noted the concept of the bike lane to nowhere is a little disingenuous because Birmingham has had a 20-year plan that creates a bike route for people to commute through the City. The plan is being completed in a phased fashion.

Mr. Larry Bertollini, 1301 Webster, asked if a mockup could be created that includes the splitter island. He hoped that trucks pulling out of side streets would have enough slop so there would not be head-on collisions. He would like to see some diagrams showing other areas where there is a bump-out that would prove turning trucks have space to get in and out of where they are going. Mr. O'Meara responded they won't neglect that. Mr. Bertollini added his main concern is for

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bikes wanting to cross where the transition is made. That is scary, and therefore he is not really sold on the concept. He would not object to eliminating the two-way and going back to a lane on the other side.

Mr. Michael Kopmeyer spoke again to say he fully endorses the idea of moving the crosswalk back a bit. He suggested stop signs at Haynes and Villa to give a pause for pedestrians to establish themselves in the intersection.

Mr. Andrew Haig came forward once more to inform the group that Auto Europe vehicles don't have much ground clearance and can't clear a curb at all.

The chairperson wrapped up the public comments part of the evening at this time.

Mr. O'Meara asked Mr. Labadie to comment on the idea of moving the Maple Rd. crosswalk further south. Mr. Labadie said moving the crosswalk has other ramifications about being able to see the pedestrians and a few other things that are not accepted practice.. Visibility of the signals would be substandard as well. The suggested option addresses everything they are trying to accomplish and still stays within accepted practice.

Ms. Slanga was not convinced that in the future people would not optimize their supply chains and go with fewer deliveries and larger trucks. Therefore she advocated cutting back the island a little more to make it a bit easier for the large trucks to get through. The 50 ft. truck is accommodated by the plan right now but it doesn't accommodate the 62 ft. truck. Mr. Labadie indicated they can work on that when it goes into design. Mr. Bolyard noted they are all for the design, but it has to get better. Driver capabilities must be factored in. Mr. Surnow's thought was to make the island whatever the bare minimum is to accommodate the trucks, but yet provide a margin of safety to the pedestrians.

Discussion considered why this is the only place trucks can come and go from the Rail District. Mr. O'Meara indicated that Lincoln and S. Eton further south are considered residential streets..

The Chairperson took public comments.

Mr. Adams said this design concerns any delivery truck that is bringing commodities to the businesses in the Rail District and is exiting to go east on Maple Rd. They will make the turn, but either the light pole or the walk or don't walk post is going down. The driver cannot protrude out enough to turn and make the trailer axels stay outboard of the curb.

Mr. Lawson announced there is opposition to the proposed design that would cut commerce off to the Rail District. He didn't see how the board could vote for the

splitter island. Dr. Rontal added the board now has dramatically different information. They thought a 50 ft. trailer would be long enough to accommodate, but they are hearing from the businesses in the District that 50 ft. is probably not long enough. More information about the number of trucks coming and going into the district is needed. He thinks the board needs some time to review the new data.

Motion by Mr. Lawson

Seconded by Dr. Rontal to recommend that the City Commission approve and budget for the following Multi-Modal improvements to S. Eton Rd. from Maple Rd. to Yosemite Blvd.:

- a. Further study of installation of a splitter island at Maple Rd.**
- b. Relocation of the west side curb and gutter to accommodate an 8 ft. wide sidewalk along the entire block.**
- c. Installation of a wider sidewalk adjacent to the handicap ramp at the southeast corner of Maple Rd.**
- d. Installation of sharrows on green painted squares for both directions.**

Mr. Lawson amended his motion but the amendment failed and therefore the board voted on his original motion.

Motion carried, 5-2.

ROLLCALL VOTE

Yeas: Rontal, Adams, Edwards, Folberg, Surnow

Nays: Lawson, Slanga

Absent: None

Mr. O'Meara clarified that everything from Maple Rd. to Lincoln Ave. must be agreed upon as a package before this is returned to the Commission.

The public hearing closed.

6. OAKLAND AVE - WOODWARD AVE. TO LAWNSDALE AVE.

Mr. O'Meara advised that last month, MMTB reviewed and approved plans to reconstruct Lawndale Ave. south of Oakland Ave. The plan was forwarded to the City Commission for their meeting of May 22, 2017, and was subsequently approved.

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While reviewing the plan, further questions were raised about the pedestrian environment on this section of Oakland Ave. The existing handicap ramp at the southeast corner of the Oakland Ave. & Lawndale Ave. intersection encourages pedestrians to cross in the middle of the Lawndale Ave. intersection, which is not appropriate. Further, while the Commission endorsed the idea in the Master Plan to relocate the Oakland Ave. pedestrian crossing at Woodward Ave., it appeared that the plan needed some refinement. The Commission asked that these issues be studied further by the MMTB.

F&V prepared a plan that proposes removing the existing crossing at Woodward Ave. and relocating it to the south side of the Oakland Ave. intersection. New ramps would be installed to allow for crossing Oakland Blvd. at the traffic signal. Further, the ramp at the southeast corner of the Lawndale Ave. intersection is proposed to be removed and relocated further east. A corresponding ramp is proposed at the northeast corner of Lawndale as well.

The Chairperson opened up discussion to the public.

Mr. Dan Isaksen, 1386 Yorkshire, said he uses this intersection regularly on his bicycle going to and from Downtown. He thinks that moving the crosswalk is a great idea for bicyclists. He pointed out that the resident on the northeast corner uses the pedestrian ramp as a driveway. Further, the northbound traffic on Lawndale does not have a stop sign, where the other directions do. Additionally he wondered whether an eastbound bike lane on the south side of the one short block might make sense.

Motion by Ms. Slanga

Seconded by Dr. Rontal to recommend to the City Commission the approval of the multi-modal improvements proposed for Oakland Ave. between Woodward Ave. and Lawndale Ave., as shown on the plan prepared for this purpose, to be implemented in 2017 and 2018, in conjunction with the Lawndale Ave. and Woodward Ave. street improvement projects respectively.

Motion carried, 7-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Slanga, Rontal, Adams, Edwards, Folberg, Lawson, Surnow

Nays: None

Absent: None

7. TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURES

Ms. Ecker advised that comments have been received from a resident that talked about the possibility of shutting down certain sections of road for pedestrian use. Mr. Surnow explained there could be a whole range of closures from a couple of hours to permanently.

Everyone agreed this seems like an interesting idea and it should be considered on a case-by-case basis as the City currently has been doing. The idea of having a regular closure seems like it would have to come from the business owners and the residents in that particular District because they would be most impacted. The MMTB and then the Commission could then consider the request.

8. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Ms. Slanga inquired what is being done to bring electric charging stations into the City. Mr. O'Meara answered they have looked at that extensively. The issue in the downtown area is the shortage of parking spaces. If charging stations are installed, then those spaces have to be taken out of service for the large majority of drivers using cars with gasoline engines.

A member of the audience thought that crossing Woodward Ave. at Brown St. seems like a nice place to cross. However once a pedestrian gets onto the island, crossing northbound Woodward Ave. is quite hazardous. It would be nice to have some type of a light signal there. Ms. Ecker responded that the City is aware of the situation; however the road and the right-of-way belong to MDOT. The City continues to remind them it is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Ms. Katie Schafer, 1966 Fairway, thought that for special events such as Walk Birmingham Week the crosswalks could be temporarily embellished to make them interesting. Ms. Ecker noted the Public Arts Board recently created a new sub-committee to come up with ways to bring public art into the City.

9. MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS (none)

10. NEXT MEETING

The Board had mixed feelings about when to hold the next meeting. A survey will be sent out.

11. ADJOURNMENT

No further business being evident, the board members adjourned the meeting at 8:44 p.m.

Jana Ecker, Planning Director

Paul O'Meara, City Engineer