



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

MINUTES

Traffic Operations Committee

September 18, 2018, 12:00 PM
2nd floor Conference Room
City Hall, 41 Green Street, Concord, NH

Staff Present:

Rob Mack, Engineering Services (Chair)
Jim Major (General Services)
Sam Durfee, (Planning Division)
John Thomas (Police Department)
Dick Lemieux (TPAC Chair)

Guests:

1. Regular Discussion Items

a. Overview of City-Wide Crash Data

Crash data for August 2018 was reviewed. There were 136 reportable crashes in August 2018. This compares with 89 and 109 reportable crashes in August 2017 and 2016, respectively. 18 crashes resulted in a total of 19 people injured. There were no fatalities.

There were two reported crashes involving pedestrians: a pedestrian aged 74 years crossing East Side Drive, not in a crosswalk, and being struck by a vehicle turning left out of the driveway at #164 (minor injuries, fault not determined); and a flagger aged 55 years controlling Rockingham Street traffic at a construction zone near Donovan Street and allegedly being struck by the side-view mirror of a passing eastbound Rockingham vehicle (no injury, fault not determined).

There were two reported crashes involving bicyclists: a bicyclist aged 64 years riding eastbound on Pillsbury Street, crossing Broadway without stopping at the stop sign and being struck by a vehicle traveling southbound on Broadway (minor injuries, bicyclist at fault, helmet not worn); and a bicyclist aged 18 years crossing Abbott Road from the north to the south side and being struck by a vehicle traveling westbound on Abbott Road (injuries, driver at fault, helmet not worn).

The recent bicyclist fatality on N. State Street north of Hutchins Street was discussed. Details of the crash were unavailable pending the ongoing investigation by CPD.

b. City Council Meeting Update

At its September 10, 2018 meeting, City Council approved the Rockingham Street 25 mph speed limit. Referrals were also sent to TOC and TPAC (Items 3a and 3b, below).

c. Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC) Update

At its August 25, 2018 meeting, TPAC: discussed an overview of the Langley Parkway Phase 3 project; and heard public testimony from a Guay Street resident regarding Item 3a, below.

2. Ongoing Discussion and Action Items

a. Referral from Councilor Nyhan regarding a resident concern on traffic speed along Broadway at Allison and Pillsbury Streets

General Services made some improvements to enhance visibility of the Pillsbury Street westbound-approach stop sign, including: installing a ‘Stop Ahead’ sign on this street approach; and trimming back some overhanging branches. It was noted that crashes had increased at the Pillsbury Street intersection over the last few years, while a decrease occurred at the Allison Street intersection. Staff is awaiting additional crash data from CPD to ascertain if there is any pattern associated with the recent crashes at the Pillsbury street intersection. CPD indicated that they had spoken with the resident regarding her concerns on speeding and that they targeted the area with speed-enforcement patrols. CPD’s speed trailer was deployed a few weeks ago on Broadway in this area from a Monday through Thursday.

b. Referral from Councilor Nyhan regarding a resident concern on traffic speed on Wilson Avenue and a request for sidewalk

CPD had deployed the speed-feedback trailer on Wilson Avenue in early July. A patrol officer also spoke with one of the residents regarding speed issues. He reported that residents were pleased with the speed trailer deployment. One resident noted that, while watching vehicle speeds displayed by the trailer, he was surprised to find that traffic was actually traveling at a much slower speed than he otherwise thought was occurring.

Engineering conducted a volume and speed count along Wilson Avenue. The weekday volume in early July was around 750 to 850 vehicles per day. A 2011 count in early June indicated about 950 vehicles per day, slightly higher as school would have been in session. Staff feels that the volume of traffic appears reasonable for this type of street that services a large neighborhood area and is not indicative of a substantial ‘cut-through’ traffic problem. Some cut-through traffic would be expected between South and Clinton Streets, for example South Street traffic accessing the churches at the Clinton/Norwich intersection. The city’s Transportation Master Plan acknowledges the need to maintain connectivity through and between neighborhoods so that travelers have options in navigating the city’s street network.

Speeds were recorded along Wilson Street over a several day period, with and without the presence of CPD’s speed trailer. Prior to the trailer deployment, average speeds were 24-26 mph and 85th percentile speeds were 30-32 mph. With the speed trailer deployed, average speeds were about 24-25 mph and 85th percentile speeds reduced to 28-31 mph. The street is appropriately posted with 25 mph speed limit signs. TOC and CPD concur that significant speeding does not appear to be an overall problem on this street. Inappropriate speed could certainly be attributable to a few inconsiderate drivers and that enforcement would be the appropriate action.

Regarding sidewalk, it was noted that the city’s Pedestrian Master Plan indicates that sidewalk along Wilson Street from South Street to Norwich Street is planned for future implementation, but not as a priority. This sidewalk would typically be considered for construction when the street is reconstructed (not yet programmed in upcoming years).

c. Referral from City Council regarding a resident concern with excessive traffic speed along Rumford Street between Centre and Washington Streets.

CPD had spoken with the resident about the speeding concerns. CPD was unable to find a suitable location for deployment of the speed trailer along this section of Rumford Street due to curb, sidewalk and on-street parking. CPD conducted targeted speed enforcement here with motorcycle units but did not observe any speeding violations. Engineering Services recorded speeds along this section of Rumford Street over a several-day period in early September. Of about 2,300 vehicles sampled, average speeds were 23 mph and 85th percentile speeds were 28 mph. This is significantly lower than the street's 30 mph speed limit and results from street's seeming narrowness due to on-street parking. TOC and CPD concur that significant speeding does not appear to be an overall problem on this street. Inappropriate speed could certainly be attributable to a few inconsiderate drivers and that enforcement would be the appropriate action. TOC concurred that a perception of 'high speed' can also be induced by the apparent narrowness of the travel-way with cars parked along the street.

d. Referral from City Council regarding a request by a third grade class at Christa McAuliffe School to install school zone flashing lights on Rumford Street to slow traffic as well as additional mid-block crosswalks on both Rumford and N. Spring Streets

Matt Cashman of SAU 8 requested that discussion of this item be deferred until SAU 8 has had an opportunity for an internal discussion of the matter. As such, TOC deferred the item pending additional feedback from SAU 8.

3. New Discussion and Action Items

a. Referral from City Council regarding a petition from Guay Street residents to reduce the speed limit on neighborhood streets or install sidewalk

Rob Mack reported that Tom Burrill, resident of Guay Street, spoke at TPAC last month regarding a petition submitted to City Council in August from 31 residents on Guay Street, Cricket Lane, Temi Road and Dennis Drive asking for a reduced speed limit or sidewalks in the neighborhood. His primary concerns resulted from a close and uncomfortable encounter with an inconsiderate and speeding driver who was soon after identified and spoken to by CPD. His concerns include some traffic driving too fast, streets narrowed by on-street parking and potentially restricting access by emergency or other large vehicles, lack of stop and speed limit signs, and walking safety as there is no sidewalk.

The above streets constitute a small cul-de-sac neighborhood of about three dozen homes. These streets are short and vary in length from about 200 ft to 1,000 ft. Engineering Services recorded speeds along Guay Street over a several-day period in early September. Of about 600 vehicles sampled, average speeds were 17-18 mph and 85th percentile speeds were 24 mph. While no speed limit signs are posted in the small neighborhood, actual speeds are significantly lower than the 30 mph statutory speed limit. TOC and CPD concurred that significant speeding does not appear to be an overall problem on this street. Inappropriate speed could certainly be attributable to a few inconsiderate drivers and that enforcement would be the appropriate action, as was the case here as initiated by the resident. It was noted that these streets were good examples of the many local residential streets that would be included in the potential city-wide 25 mph speed limit to be considered by TPAC and others during the 2020 update to the city's Transportation Master Plan.

Regarding sidewalk, it was noted that the city's Pedestrian Master Plan recommends future sidewalk along Cricket Lane (from the gate), Temi Road and Guay Street from Temi Road to Pembroke Road. Sidewalk is not indicated along Guay Street north of Temi Road. These sidewalks segments are not

indicated as priority sidewalk segments and would typically be considered for construction when the street is reconstructed (not yet programmed in upcoming years).

Regarding the request for stop signs in the neighborhood, it was noted that city practice is to install stop signs at locations based on an engineering study for need and not solely for speed control. Minor-street approaches to T-intersections do not generally require stop signs as the minor side street very clearly terminates at the cross-street and NH Statutes (rules of the road) require drivers to yield the right-of-way to drivers on the through street. In small residential pockets like this neighborhood, adding more stop signs would have no apparent effect on vehicle operation but would contribute to sign clutter and visual impact.

Mr. Burrill's concerns also include potential street blockage by on-street parking which might occur if cars parked on the street opposite each other. Staff notes that Guay Street, along with the other neighborhood streets, is about 22 feet wide. This is wide enough to park on one side of the street and still allow a minimum of 12 feet for other vehicles to pass through per the Ordinance. At the TPAC meeting, Mr. Burrill was advised that if cars were ever parked on both sides and immediately opposite each other, that the 12-foot minimum would not be maintained; in this case the police department should be contacted.

CPD offered to reach out to Mr. Burrill and discuss his concerns.

b. Referral from Councilor Kenison regarding a constituent concern that sight lines are restricted when turning from Thorndike Street onto South Street

At issue is a resident concern that it is difficult to turn left out of Thorndike Street onto South Street southbound due to restricted sight lines to South Street traffic approaching from the south. It was felt that the bump-out at the intersection crosswalk might be contributory to this problem.

Rob Mack visited the intersection and found that appropriate sight lines were available. The crosswalk bump-out on the south leg of the intersection actually enhances the sight line to the left more so than at most other downtown intersections where on-street parking is allowed within 20 to 30 feet of the side street. In this case, the bump-out sets back South Street parking about 60 feet from Thorndike Street resulting in better potential sight lines. These sight lines would be from a Thorndike vehicle pulled up to the edge of the travel way on South Street, not back at the stop line which is set back considerably from South Street due to the crosswalk and stop sign locations.

The perceived sight-line interference here is typical across the city where on-street parking occurs. Because of crosswalks and the need to locate stop signs, stop lines are often painted well back from the through street, and certainly in advance of crosswalks. CPD advises that per state law, drivers must first stop at a stop sign or stop line, then proceed carefully forward to where they can safely see approaching traffic so that they can judge when it's safe to enter or cross the through street. The 'through street' is considered as the edge of the travel-way, or in this case the projected white edge line along South Street, which is well past the stop line painted on Thorndike Street. While this may seem intuitive to most, staff still get concerns from some drivers that they can't see when stopped at the stop line.

TOC attendees concurred that the current intersection configuration was reasonable and that appropriate sight lines were available with proper driver action. Engineering staff will check past crash history at this intersection.

4. Open Discussion Items

a. Staff response to miscellaneous inquiries (refer to correspondence in agenda packet)

None.

b. Directional guide signs from freeway exits

At issue is NHDOT's business directional signing program which places business (logo) signs on interstate exit ramps that point motorists in the direction of specific business services. These businesses should ideally be in close proximity to the interchange so drivers can find them intuitively. If a specific destination needs multiple way-finding signs to get to its front door, then a municipality must have a program to add additional way-finding signs from the interchange as needed. The city has generally not allowed such business way-finding signs on the city street network except for a few public destinations such as museums, historic places, and the convention center. At issue is the potential proliferation of specific business directional signs that would likely accumulate on streets through the downtown core and other places. TOC reiterated its support of not recommending new business way-finding signs along city streets.

c. Angela Way Weeble request

John Thomas reported that he had received multiple email requests from Angela Way residents to locate a weeble at the crosswalk on South Street. At issue are concerns about school children crossing South Street from the Angela Way neighborhood to access the sidewalk which is along the opposite (east) side of South Street.

TOC had responded to several similar requests here in the past and had felt that the pedestrian crossing volume was too low to justify use of one of the limited number of weebles that the city has. TOC has in the past planned their use at highly-used crosswalk locations such as next to schools and parks or in the busy downtown core. While city policy limits the number of weebles to 24, it was noted that there are currently less than 24 deployed now as several were removed from Main Street following the Main Street Complete Street project. After some discussion TOC concurred to deploy one of the available weebles at Angela Way for the next two months (before snow season begins). TOC will plan to reevaluate weeble locations city-wide next March, at which time the Angela Way location may or may not be continued.

A potential crosswalk that might benefit from a weeble deployment was the Storrs Street crosswalk at the southern driveway to the Capital Shopping Plaza (near the NH liquor commission building). This is a high use crosswalk that is exposed to a high volume of traffic turning left from the plaza onto Storrs Street southbound. Several pedestrian crashes have been reported here over the years. TOC attendees concurred that this would be an appropriate place to locate a weeble. General Services will schedule the placement of both weebles as discussed for the remainder of this season.

Next meeting date: October 16, 2018