



Engineering Services Division

Traffic Operations Committee

Meeting Minutes - August 16, 2011

Attendees: Rob Mack, PE, PTOE, Engineering Services Division
Ed Roberge, PE, Engineering Services Division
Steve Henninger, Planning Division
Jim Major, General Services
Sean Brown, Concord Fire Department
Rick Wollert, Concord Fire Department
Dick Lemieux, TPAC Chair

Regular Discussion Items

- 1) **Overview of city-wide accident data, including prior-month accident summary and discussion of select accident locations, circumstances and potential action.**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: Traffic accident data for July 2011 was reviewed. There were 72 reportable accidents in July 2011. This compares with 96 and 100 reportable accidents in July 2010 and 2009, respectively. 12 accidents resulted in total of 13 people injured, with none of those injuries occurring on Loudon Road. There were no fatalities

There was one accident involving a pedestrian: a pedestrian aged 57 years walking in an access road in Banks Chevrolet and being struck by a vehicle backing out of a service bay (minor injury, driver at fault).

There were three accidents involving bicyclists: a bicyclist aged 36 years riding southbound on Mountain Road and impacting an eastbound vehicle turning left out of West Portsmouth Street after coming to a stop (minor injuries, driver at fault, helmet worn); a bicyclist aged 29 years traveling northbound on Manchester Street against traffic and impacting a vehicle making a right turn from Garvins Falls Road (minor injury, bicyclist at fault, no helmet); and a bicyclist aged 49 years traveling westbound on Pleasant Street on the sidewalk and being struck by a vehicle exiting a driveway at 227 Pleasant Street (minor injury, bicyclist at fault, helmet use not reported).

Rick Wollert noted he received a citizen concern about turning traffic not yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalk at the Centre/N. State intersection. At issue is the crossing of N. State Street on the east leg of the intersection. Pedestrian crossings are concurrent with parallel traffic movement with right or left turning traffic required to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. This type of pedestrian crossing operation was designed at this location (rather than exclusive pedestrian phase) because of limited capacity at the intersection to handle both vehicle and pedestrian demands as well as the inclusion of this intersection in the coordinated signal system along N. State Street. Rob Mack will inform the Traffic Enforcement Unit of the concern and will plan to observe intersection operation to better define the issue. It was noted that in the coming months, the pedestrian signal heads at this intersection will be upgraded to the larger countdown-type displays as part of the Energy Efficiency Community Development Block Grant program. The FHWA has found that countdown pedestrian signals are a highly effective countermeasure to improve pedestrian safety.

2) **City Council meeting update.**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: City Council accepted TOC reports recommending the STOP sign policy and the addition of a street light on Bow Street. Council also set a September public hearing for the STOP/YIELD sign changes at Auburn/Forest and Auburn/Penacook.

3) **Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC) update.**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: TPAC discussed the McKee Square intersection improvement project, the proposed STOP sign policy, the current CIP project summary, the referral on potentially opening the Cricket Lane gate, and the TPAC list of accomplishments. Also discussed was the potential application for TIGER3 grant funding for select projects such as Langley North, Main Street Streetscape, and the Merrimack River Greenway Trail.

B. **On-going Discussion and Action Items.**

1) **Referral from Council regarding a request from Alex de Nesnera to remove the STOP signs on the School Street approaches to the School Street/N. Fruit Street intersection. (Council: 3/14/11).**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: Engineering plans to gather traffic additional information at the intersection in early September after classes resume at the high school. A full discussion of findings is anticipated at the September TOC meeting.

2) **Referral from Councilor Patten regarding a request from a resident in the Cricket Lane area to consider opening the gate on Cricket Lane. (Engineering: 5/26/11).**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: The original resident request to consider opening the gate was withdrawn. Further discussion was deferred pending feedback from Councilor Patten.

C. **New Discussion and Action Items**

1) **Discussion of City practice regarding installation of traffic control signs.**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: At issue is the inadvertent and premature replacement of YIELD signs with STOP signs at the Auburn/Forest and Auburn/Penacook intersections in late July. Such signs are located by Ordinance and require a formal public hearing and approval by Council, a process that can take from one to two months. At Administration's request, the subject YIELD signs were replaced to their preexisting locations on August 8, 2011. Council set a public hearing for this change on September 12, 2011.

While the subject sign change was an atypical and inadvertent occurrence, staff concurred to be cognizant of traffic sign changes that must be predicated by formal Ordinance change (e.g. STOP, YIELD, parking signs, turn prohibitions). Staff concurred that if unique circumstances arise where there may be potential benefit in making an interim sign change (for example, public safety) prior to the formal adoption of the Ordinance by Council, guidance will be sought from the City Manager as to the appropriate course of action.

2) **Referral from Councilor Patten regarding a constituent concern on traffic control and turning movements at the Blodgett/Pembroke intersection. (Council: 7/22/11).**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: At issue is a resident concern with the configuration of the intersection, and in particular, with the manner that westbound Pembroke Road vehicles continue westbound through the intersection while opposing traffic from Blodgett Street rounds the curve onto Pembroke Road eastbound. Blodgett Street and Pembroke Road to the east form the primary travel roadway to/from Loudon Road. The 500-foot long cul-de-sac portion of Pembroke Road to the west serves only occasional traffic accessing the rear driveways to Colebrook Bank (mostly for bank customers travelling to/from Pembroke Road). A section of raised median defines the curve from Blodgett Street to Pembroke Road, but is located directly across the intersection area with the western leg of Pembroke Road. Making left-turns to or from the west leg is awkward due to the section raised median. There were three reported crashes at the intersection in the over-seven-year period since 2004; all three involved a single vehicle (from various directions) misjudging the turn and striking a sign in the median.

TOC concurred that the intersection is atypical in geometry and should ultimately be reconfigured to tee the west leg of Pembroke Street into a more compact and 90-degree intersection off the curve. This would include revising the median opening along the curve to allow a better-located opening for traffic turning to/from the west. An interim option to remove the raised median was not preferred as it was felt the median helps define the sharp curve in the primary travel route between Blodgett Street and Pembroke Road to the east. Options to revise pavement markings alone were discussed, but an appropriate configuration was not apparent due to the existing raised median.

TOC felt that the ultimate option, reconfiguring the minor west leg to intersect at a 90-degree T intersection, was the appropriate solution. TOC recommended that reconfiguration of this intersection be added to CIP 520, Intersection Safety Improvements, and be considered in conjunction with the next repaving project in the area. In the mean time, TOC concurred that the current operation be continued since crash history is very low at the intersection, side-street traffic volume from Pembroke Road to the west was very light, and that the peculiarity of the intersection did not readily accommodate revised signage or markings alone.

3) **Request by Will Ethier of 25 Downing Street to paint a handicapped parking space(s) in the vicinity of West Street Ward House. (Parking: 8/09/11).**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: The Parking Committee discussed this request at its August 15, 2011 meeting and approved the location of two on-street handicapped parking spaces adjacent to the West Street Ward House, one on West Street and one on Badger Street, with both nearest the crosswalk ramp on the southwest corner of the West/Badger intersection. This corner was also in close proximity to the accessible ramp located on the Badger Street side of the Ward House. TOC concurred with the Parking Committee's recommendation. Engineering will prepare a layout plan for the exact location of each space considering the necessary offset from the crosswalks. If feasible, consideration would be given to adding some paving in the grass panel between the curb and sidewalk in the vicinity of each space. It appears that sidewalk grades might preclude that possibility at the Badger Street space, while the West Street space might be located in the proximity of the currently-paved walkway at the front of the Ward House.

4) **Request by Lori Baldwin of the Montessori Children's Center at 131 Hoit Road for signs to slow traffic on Hoit Road. (Engineering: 8/09/11).**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: At issue is a concern that sight distance is limited for vehicles leaving the center and turning onto Hoit Road, particularly to the east, and that signs, perhaps school zone, should be installed to remind traffic to slow down along Hoit Road in the area. Engineering received a similar request from Kristi Button of the Montessori Center this past April (discussed at TOC's May 17, 2011 meeting). In follow up to the prior April request, Rob Mack met with Heather Parkinson (Montessori staff) at the center at a busy time that she suggested (Friday 4/22/11 at about 11:15 AM) to observe traffic and roadway conditions. April 22, 2011 discussion points are summarized below and were emailed by Engineering to Lori Baldwin on August 9, 2011 (no reply yet received).

On April 22, Rob Mack observed sight lines to/from the school driveway to be appropriate and there appeared to be ample opportunities for occasional driveway exits to turn safely onto Hoit Road. He suggested to Ms. Parkinson that there were a few things that could enhance the sight lines further and perhaps add benefit to the movement of traffic from the center's driveway. In April there was a large pine tree with low overhanging branches near the east end of the center's front-yard fence that acted to limit additional sight distance to the east. At present, this tree has been removed along with the center section of the front yard fence. Also noted to Ms. Parkinson in April was that the apparent sight line for vehicles exiting the center's driveway was also somewhat limited in to the west due to the location of the center's business sign; vehicles, especially higher SUV's, need to creep up to the edge of Hoit Road to maximize their view to the west because of the sign. At present, this sign is in the same location. Any improvement to increase either of these sight lines could enhance parents' perception of approaching traffic.

Regarding street signs, the City installed yellow side-road signs on both Hoit Road approaches to the center several years ago, apparently in response to a request from the center. Regarding school zone signage, the city has established school zones at large primary and secondary schools coupled with walk-to-school routes and crosswalks. The Montessori center is quite small at roughly 19 students, students are driven to the facility, and the outside play area is generally behind the building and fenced (separated from the road). It is unlikely that permanent fixed signage will alter drivers' habits of driving in that area, although such signs could instill a false sense of security for drivers leaving the center. In April, Ms. Parkinson asked if the center could temporarily locate a small, commercially-available plastic a-frame children sign (perhaps with flag) near the driveway location. This could be an option if the temporary sign was off the public way. It may be more effective if used only at times when driveway traffic peaks (removed at all other times). This may better attract a driver's attention to occasional driveway activity rather than keeping it there 24/7.

TOC reaffirmed its concurrence with the above response provided by Engineering.

D. 

- 1) **Staff response to miscellaneous inquiries (refer to correspondence in agenda packet).**

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: None

Respectfully submitted,

Robert J. Mack, PE, PTOE, Traffic Engineer
Chair, Traffic Operations Committee

***The next Traffic Operations Committee meeting will be held on
TUESDAY, September 20, 2011 @ 1:00 PM in the 2ND Floor Conference Room.***