



CITY OF BURLINGTON, VERMONT
CITY COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION, ENERGY & UTILITIES COMMITTEE

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Councilor Maxwell Tracy, Chair, WARD 2
Councilor, Tom Ayres, WARD 7
Councilor William “Chip” Mason, WARD 5

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Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES:

Wednesday, September 10th - 2014 at 6:00 PM

**Burlington Police Department – Community Room
1 North Avenue – Burlington, VT**

Members present: Chair, Maxwell Tracy (TEUC)
Tom Ayres (TEUC)
Chip Mason (TEUC)

Others present: See attached sign-in sheet

Chair Tracy called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

1. Agenda

Chair Tracy moved to approve the agenda with a change in the order of the items: the Public Forum will occur after the presentation of the North Avenue Corridor Study.

All in favor

2. Minutes of 8/13/14

All in favor to approve minutes from 8/13/14

3. Adoption of NACTO Street Design Guide – Nicole Losch, DPW; Eleni Churchill, CCRPC; Jason Charest, CCRPC

Losch: Given the agenda we have to North Avenue, we haven't prepared a lot of information about this guide right now. We have provided the link to the NACTO Street Design Guide for you to digest this guide and take action about this issue in the next meeting. We have been using these guides in some of our projects. FHWA recently endorsed these guides, recognizing that they give more flexibility in design.

Mason: I propose delaying action on this item to the next TEUC meeting.

All in favor.

4. North Avenue Corridor Study - Nicole Losch, DPW

Nicole Losch from DPW, Eleni Churchill and Jason Charest from CCRPC gave a presentation of the North Avenue Corridor Study and of the Implementation Plan. See meeting materials for both the presentation and the Implementation Plan.

5. Public Forum

Residents gave their opinions on the Corridor Study and the Implementation Plan. See attached list of members of the public who provided comments.

Deliberation

TEUC members deliberated before taking action regarding the Implementation Plan for the North Avenue Corridor Study:

Ayres: I have amendments, and I have some questions about some of the minutia. Just so we have them on the public record.

Tracy: What I would like to do is to move the recommendations as a whole. As we do in the regular City Council, if Councilors have amendments they can make them

Mason: I move the adoption of the implementation plan from the advisory study for consideration to the full City Council on September 22

Ayres: I second that but I would like to have the floor back have some amendments for when you deem it appropriate.

Tracy: You can have the floor now

Ayres: If I may, I will ask two relatively simple questions: In the short term crosswalk additions. What sort of signifiers will there be present to call attention to the fact that there will be a crosswalk? How will I, as a driver, know when there will be a crosswalk?

Losch: Each location is different. The basic enhancement will be the crosswalk and warning signing at the crossing to let the drivers know there is a crosswalk. Additional enhancements can be either with paint or extending the curb into the street to make pedestrians more visible and shorten the crossing distance. One more option is the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons

(RRFB), like the ones on Pine Street. We will look at each location in particular. We look at traffic speeds, number of pedestrians, street lighting, the number of lanes pedestrians will need to cross. Depending on the information at each location we will develop a plan to make sure the crossing is visible and safe to cross.

Ayres: The second question that I have relates to something that has been discussed a lot. It's related to the 127 slip lane, I wish we could pilot this. What is the approx. cost of the elimination plan, and if proven not feasible, how simple would it be to backtrack?

Losch: It is difficult to give an estimate for the reconstruction. We gave a quick estimate is \$70,000 for everything from removing the concrete island to making the signal adjustments. That is a very rough estimate but we don't have a lot of data. We wanted to have a placeholder. The biggest component in terms of construction would be to remove the concrete island, which is not complicated, in the grand scheme of things. Based on recent projects, my guess would be \$10-25K, removal would be a bit less, but reinstalling it would be a similar cost.

Ayres: I don't have any further questions.

Mason: Paul Sisson had asked this question previously. Assuming we adopt the pilot, who determines if the pilot project is a success or failure and modifications? Who makes the decisions?

Losch: It is an iterative process. Typically for large projects like this, it is necessary to get feedback from as many people as possible including residents and City Council. Public Works takes all this feedback into consideration for the decision. However, there are so many components to what can be considered success or a failure. From our experience, public input is equally important when we review. What I expect is that we will present all the metrics in community meetings, to this committee, to the full Council, if they are interested, and determine the level of comfort where the project stands.

Mason: To ask it differently, in the case of the pilot project of 4 lanes to 3 lanes for example, would it be possible for the Council to reserve that authority to make the decision?

Losch: Yes

Mason: I'm not suggesting it would be that way, but if there were desire to do that, it would be a possibility.

Spencer: Yes.

Tracy: In terms of the bike lane piece. The lanes in the short term are buffered lanes. Correct?

Losch: Correct. There is one section from Institute Road to 127 that was recommended to be a pilot protected bike lane.

Tracy: I just want to make sure people understand the difference between buffered and protected. Buffered means space in between traffic and people, but no physical barrier. A point of reference is South Union. Protected lanes have a physical barrier between cars and bikes.

Tracy: In terms of parking, south of Washington Street, that remains in the current draft.

Losch: That is correct.

Mason: Before we go to amendments, to talk about Local Motion's proposal, there is an expense to remove the island. Local Motion developed a proposal leaving the island. What would be the expense of putting a bike signal and leaving the island? Is that a nominal expense?

Losch: We just saw this proposal very recently and I don't know with the signal infrastructure that is out there, how feasible this alternative is. Signal hardware is relatively expensive, so even if this is a bike signal, it wouldn't be a lot less expensive than having a regular traffic signal. The other consideration with this concept is that it is proposing an enhanced crossing across the slip lanes and providing a point of control across the actual approach, it doesn't give improvements to any other modes, whereas the other concept provides more thorough consideration to the other modes.

Tracy: Do any of the councilors have amendments that they want to bring forward at this time?

Ayres: I have three amendments. My proposal is to move the 4 to 3 plan, currently in the mid-term and move it to the short term.

Losch: The implementation plan under consideration now is the advisory committee's recommendation, which has the pilot in the short term.

Ayres: In this case, I will withdraw my amendment.

Losch: The differences between the two recommendations are in slide 37.

Ayres: I need some clarification. Does moving to on-street parking north of Institute Road require an amendment?

Losch: Yes

Ayres: The amendment I propose is that counter to the advisory committee's recommendation, the plan we move forward to the City Council calls for a continuation for on-street parking north of Institute Road.

Mason: I will second. Is that on both sides or on one side of North Avenue?

Ayres: Both sides

Losch: If we retain parking on both sides, we won't be able to accommodate any bike lanes in any sections north of Institute Road. If we retain parking on one side, we can accommodate bike lanes in each direction

Ayres: the short term recommendations were to eliminate all parking on both sides north of Washington Street. Correct?

Losch: The advisory committee's recommendation

Ayres: What I am suggesting is that we continue to allow parking. Essentially retain the existing conditions as opposed to eliminate parking on both sides of the Avenue.

Mason: There is some confusion. With what Councilor Ayres has proposed, would that allow for bike lane on one side of North Avenue?

Losch: No. Parking is currently allowed on both sides of North Avenue, north of Institute Road.

Ayres: What is the study group's recommendation?

Losch: Retain parking on one side of North Avenue, north of Institute Road.

Ayres: That is my amendment.

Mason: May I ask the position of the Director of Public Works?

Spencer: DPW was part of the study team. Our recommendation was to go with parking on one side of the road north of Institute Road.

Mason: To be clear, this would allow continuous bike lanes?

Spencer: Yes. With parking on one side of the road, we would be able to accommodate bike lanes on both sides.

Churchill: the Advisory committee meeting's alternative is eliminating parking on both sides. If you want to retain parking on one side of Institute Road, yes we can have bike lanes on both sides of North Avenue, but not protected or buffered.

Mason: Can you restate the amendment?

Losch: Continue on-street parking on one side of North Avenue North of Institute Road.

Mason: Is this all the way to Plattsburgh Avenue or to 127?

Ayres: Only until 127

Mason: My concern is the high school. To have no bike lane seems to me a little bit silly. To be clear what Nicole said is one lane of parking from Institute Road to VT-127.

Losch: That is an option

Mason: What I am hearing is until 127.

Ayres: When you say we are proposing, do you mean the study group or the advisory committee.

Ayres: I would eliminate advisory recommendation that all parking north of Washington be eliminated. Instead, amend report parking on one side between Institute and 127 and between Shore road and Plattsburgh Ave.

Public: Are you taking comments on that?

Tracy: We can't. That is not the protocol for Robert's Rules.

Mason: There will be an opportunity before the Council, but there is a motion on the floor.

Tracy: Do you second that?

Mason: I don't second that.

Tracy: Motion fails.

Mason: I would propose an amendment to allow parking on one side of North Avenue only between Institute Road and 127.

Ayres: I will second that.

Tracy: Do you want to speak on that?

Ayres: Given that I drive through this stretch almost every day I would say this is almost a non-issue. When I drive by, I hardly see any vehicles there.

Tracy: One thing that I am hearing is that it is important to restrict parking, not only for the short term but also for the future to do a protected bike lane. If this parking is hardly used, I think it's a waste to change the game at this stage. Having study group recommendations and advisory committee recommendations has created a lot of confusion.

Mason: I don't drive this segment daily, so I withdraw my amendment.

Ayres: Does this bring us back to the advisory committee's recommendation of eliminating parking on both sides of North Avenue north of Washington Street?

Mason: The only place of North Ave north of Washington, there is currently a prohibition to Institute Road, it is allowed between Institute and 127, not allowed between 127 and Shore Road and then allowed between Shore Road and Plattsburgh Ave on both sides of the street?

Losch: Yes

Mason: Thanks for the clarification

Ayres: Henceforth, based on the advisory committee's recommendations there will be no parking north of Shore Road to Plattsburgh on either side of the street?

Losch: And also between Institute Road and 127

Mason: Anecdotally, Saint Mark's sees a lot of parking during mass on Saturday afternoon

Ayres: This is beyond anecdotally, and continues to be the case.

Spencer: Just want to underscore that parking changes need to go through the DPW Commission.

Mason: Does this mean that if Council were to approve the plan, parking changes would still need to go through the Commission?

Spencer: Correct

Losch: Many of the recommendations in here are really to authorize the City to pursue implementation.

Mason: What would the commission do to come up with a determination? How do they evaluate parking removal?

Losch: There is a public forum process, they advise that we contact affected adjacent property owners and they will take this into consideration to make the decision.

Mason: But no further studies?

Losch: They may ask for parking counts or additional information, but until we take it to the commission, we won't know.

Tracy: We are back on the floor with open discussion on the original motion

Ayres: I have one more amendment. It has to do with a consistent 25 MPH speed limit. I would like to amend the plan to maintain the 30 mph speed limit, in those stretches of the corridor where it exists. I would like to speak to that if I get a second.

Mason: I second.

Ayres: From the beginning of this process I was involved in this project, initially as a concerned citizen observing the workshops. In April of this year I was appointed to take the place of former Councilor Paul Decelles in the advisory committee. Over the course of the deliberations of the committee, I have said consistently that the 4 to 3 reconfiguration is the linchpin of this entire effort. Because of that, the calming effect of the new configuration, the speed is going to be tamped down.

This 5 mph speed reduction has been a point of significant contention for neighbors in the New North End. I have received a number of calls on both sides of this issue. I think that if we can move the 4 to 3 lane study, I think a natural result of this will be traffic calming.

Tracy: I do not support this recommendation. I was in the Public Works Commission when we went to the 25 mph limit in residential areas. We were presented with a lot of good data from traffic studies from around the country that proved that even that small 5 mph reduction can create substantial advantages in terms of safety. The fatality rate, the injury rate all go down. I think if we can increase safety, we should. I think we should be bringing the limit down to 25 mph, so I will be voting against the amendment.

Losch: I just want to add that the design speed is a big consideration. There is always a concern that if you set a speed limit that is too low for the street design, you could be creating a hazardous situation based on the fact that cars will continue to drive at a higher rate of speed.

Ayres: I want to add another comment. This whole question of speed is as much a question of enforcement as it is of regulation. I want to echo the comments of Megan Burns who stated earlier, we need to ask our officials at BPD to help us enforcing the limit. I hear a lot about speed issues, and I am talking about excessive speed. Not by a few miles. If we don't do enforce the speed limit, there won't be much difference.

Tracy: The motion passes with Councilors Ayres and Mason voting in favor, Councilor Tracy voting against. Any additional comments?

Spencer: I wanted to let the councilors know that councilor Wright, who couldn't stay, suggested that under the pilot project there was discussion about metrics for the success of the pilot. He was suggesting that your committee might benefit from fleshing out what those metrics would be so the community would know from the start what the measurements would

make the pilot successful or unsuccessful. He wanted me to pass this information during your deliberation to you to see whether you would want to delve into that as part of your motion or not.

Mason: I am not an expert and I believe none of us are, so it can't fathom to what those metrics are. To me it all comes back to determine whether this is an administrative decision or a Council decision. My inclination is that the decision to make the pilot a permanent change should be a decision of the Council and not a decision of the Director of Public Works, whoever he or she may be at the time. I don't know what my colleagues think.

Ayres: Would it be to the satisfaction of the TEUC to insert language that states that there will be metrics (some of the metrics included in the relevant slide of the presentation)? We could include language in the study that suggests what the metrics might be.

Mason: Assuming we list the measures, there is the question about how much weight to give to each of the metrics.

Tracy: The information collected will be presented to the TEUC and the Council after the pilot?

Losch: Our intent is also to present the information on the pilot project at the beginning, to see what information people think they need to see so this data can be collected before and after the pilot.

Tracy: That is satisfactory to me. I want to thank everyone involved in this process. We got comments from people across the City, and that speaks to the importance of this corridor to the City.

The implementation plan, as amended, passed unanimously.