

## **Engineering Services Division**

# Traffic Operations Committee

Meeting Minutes - March 15, 2011

Attendees: Rob Mack, PE, PTOE, Engineering Services Division

Ed Roberge, PE, Engineering Services Division Jeff Warner, PE, Engineering Services Division

Steve Henninger, Planning Division Jim Major, General Services Department Dan Andrus, Concord Fire Department

Rick Wollert, Fire Alarm Division Terry Crotty, Concord School District

Dick Lemieux, TPAC Chair

Jennifer Kretovic, Safe Routes to School

#### 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.

<u>DISCUSSION / ACTIONS</u>: Traffic accident data for February 2011 was reviewed. There were 132 reportable accidents in February 2011. This compares with 105 and 94 reportable accidents in February 2010 and 2009, respectively. 15 accidents resulted in total of 20 people injured, with 3 of those injuries occurring on Loudon Road. There were no fatalities

There were two accidents involving pedestrians: two pedestrians walking in the parking aisle at Borders and being struck by a vehicle turning from the front of the building into the aisle (minimal injury, driver at fault, glare of setting sun may be contributory); and a pedestrian (police officer) attempting to make contact with a passenger on the passenger side of a stopped vehicle and being struck on the knee when the vehicle fled the scene (no injury, driver arrested, pedestrian in road due to snow bank).

There were no accidents involving bicyclists

2) City Council Meeting Update.

<u>DISCUSSION</u> / <u>ACTIONS</u>: Council approved the proposed on-street parking changes on Knight Street at the Scandia Hall redevelopment.

3) Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC) Update.

<u>DISCUSSION</u> / <u>ACTIONS</u>: The Bicycle Master Plan and the report on the Merrimack River Greenway Trail prepared by TPAC-Bike, CNHRPC and Concord 20/20 were accepted by Council. Approval by the Planning Board of the Bicycle Master Plan is pending.

Pursuant to TPAC's discontinuance of its Neighborhood Traffic Committee (NTC) and transfer of the

neighborhood traffic function to the TOC, Rob Mack suggested development of small TOC workgroup that might meet separately and resume the efforts of the former NTC in reviewing/updating the City's Traffic Management Policy. The following individuals offered to participate in the workgroup: Rob Mack, Ed Roberge, Steve Henninger, Dan Andrus and Dick Lemieux.

В. І

#### 1) Review of priority sidewalk-plowing locations.

<u>DISCUSSION</u> / <u>ACTIONS</u>: TOC had an open discussion of various issues and concerns that arose this past winter season regarding sidewalk plowing and in particular maintenance of the city's priority plowing routes. Currently-established priority routes include the downtown core and select sidewalks at four walk-to-school areas at: Walker School, Dame School, Rumford School and Kimball School.

Regarding the potential to designate additional sidewalk routes to priority plowing status, Jim Major noted that General Services cannot maintain more than the current amount of priority routes. Adding additional priority routes would have to be counterbalanced by removing comparable lengths of existing routes from priority status. It was noted that following the school consolidations, existing priority routes at Walker, Dame and Rumford Schools are expected to be discontinued, opening the opportunity to establish new priorities at the new schools or existing schools where none exist. It was also noted that TPAC recently discussed winter accessibility issues voiced by some walkers destined between the downtown core and Ft. Eddy/Horseshoe Pond area where the only walking (or bicycling) connections are either along the footpath between Penacook Street and Commercial Street, or along Loudon Road through busy Exit 14. The reevaluation of city-wide sidewalk plowing priority might also consider these key sidewalk connections.

Frequent sidewalk maintenance problems occurred city-wide where residents or commercial snow-plow operators plowed driveways and dumped the snow back across plowed sidewalk areas. This is a prohibited action, but enforcement is not consistently performed due to limited staff capability. Suggested methods to increase education of this prohibition include addition of notices on water bills and radio/television notices. It was suggested that targeted enforcement of commercial snow-plow operators would probably help spread the word fast among this group. Potential volunteerism was also discussed, including: potential liability, the Supreme Court decision in the Jackman case, and potential to incentivize volunteerism.

#### 2) Discussion of traffic operation along Thorndike Street.

<u>DISCUSSION</u> / <u>ACTIONS</u>: At issue is an inquiry from Councilor Bennett following complaints he received from several drivers that had to back down Thorndike Street because of a conflict with oncoming traffic and insufficient street width to accommodate two-way traffic movement. This occurred on a weekend during an event at the Capital Center for the Arts when increased parking demand was experienced.

Thorndike Street is about 20 ft wide with parking for several vehicles allowed along the north side. Two-way traffic movement is permitted although the effective travel way is reduced to about 12 feet wherever there is a parked vehicle, a width sufficient for only a single vehicle to pass at any one time. Similar nearby street segments between S. Main Street and S. State Street are less restrictive in terms of effective street width. Concord Street allows two-way traffic and parking on one side but is

28 ft wide. Thompson and Fayette Streets are about 20 ft wide and allow two-way traffic but with no parking allowed. Perley Street varies from about 22 to 28 ft, has no parking and is one-way eastbound providing two eastbound approach lanes to the traffic signal.

TOC members concurred that the effective width of Thorndike Street (allowing two-way traffic and parked vehicles) was substandard and inconsistent with adjacent streets. Options include: retain two-way travel and prohibit on-street parking on both sides (removes existing space for several parked vehicles on the north side); or retain parking on the north side and convert the street to one-way only. If a one-way option was used, it would be reasonable to consider implementing an alternating one-way pattern along the adjacent street segments from Perley Street to Fayette Street. Considerations of implementing a one-way network include: conversion to one-way would allow addition of on-street parking along a number of these streets; there would be minimal inconvenience to through travel (moving between S. Main and S. State); local residents would experience constrained access perhaps requiring a trip around the block; vehicle access to/from St John's would need to be addressed; and accessibility changes at the entrance to the Kennedy Apartments would need to be addressed.

A suggested improvement to mitigate the narrow-street issue along Thorndike Street is: eliminate onstreet parking on the north side in the near term; reassess the area parking situation after opening of the Sanel Block and CATCH developments; and ultimately consider potential for area street conversion to one-way pairs with potential addition of on-street parking. TOC recommended this discussion be referred to the Parking Committee for their consideration.

### C. New Discussion and Action Items

1) Referral from Police regarding a request from Revolution Cyclery to close select downtown streets for a bicycle criterium event on Sunday, August 21, 2011. (Police: 3/14/11).

<u>DISCUSSION / ACTIONS</u>: This referral was made by City Council to the Police Department. The proposed event would be a one-day (6 AM to 4 PM) bicycle race on a closed-loop course using select streets in the downtown area. The proposed event would require the closure of portions of N. Main and N. State Streets between Centre and Pleasant Streets, and Green Street from Capital Street to Park Street. Council's stated concern was the potential effect of access restriction on Sunday services at select downtown churches. The event's Sunday schedule would coincide with lower-than-average traffic demands in the downtown area.

While TOC members were generally favorable of the event, there were some concerns that N. Spring Street would be the next available north-south detour of the western side of the downtown core. Use of N. Spring Street may add some complexity to the event setup including detour signing, location of officers, and potential parking changes. Another option which might consider keeping Green Street open to traffic as the primary detour along the west side of downtown could be less impacting to traffic access and simpler to maintain, although the bike race circuit would need modification. Other concerns were maintenance of north-south emergency access routes through the downtown core, access to parking garages downtown, and access to several downtown churches and select businesses on Sunday.

TOC members generally concurred that a race route that retained Green Street as the maintained

north-south 'detour' of the west side of the downtown core would be simpler to maintain and would minimize potential impacts to nearby neighborhood streets. However, some members noted that it may be nice to have such an event pass in front of the city hall complex.

TOC recommended that it would beneficial for the Police Department to arrange a working meeting with select staff from Engineering, Police, Fire, as well as Revolution Cyclery, to get a better understanding of the details of this event and work out an optimal plan that balances the needs of the bicycle event with the need to maintain access to and through the downtown core during the event.

2) 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).

<u>DISCUSSION</u> / <u>ACTIONS</u>: Council approved the addition of STOP signs on the School Street approaches to the intersection in March 2008 converting the former two-way STOP intersection into the current multi-way STOP condition. Although not recommended by TOC at the time since MUTCD warrants for multi-way STOP were not indicated, Council approved the change to avoid potential litigation initiated by advocates for a sight-impaired student who crossed this intersection while walking to Concord High School. The subject resident request is to remove the multi-way STOP condition because the student did not attend Concord High School any more.

With exception for any substantial change in traffic condition which might have occurred at the intersection since early 2008, TOC members generally reaffirmed their prior opinion that if MUTCDwarrants for multi-way STOP were not met that they would be favorable to removal of the multi-way STOP condition. Traffic volumes along School Street did not change significantly following the implementation of multi-way STOP. General Services reported that plowing along School Street can be tricky in slippery conditions since the multi-way STOP went in, but it has not been a substantial problem. Some positive comments had been received in the past from residents and school district bus drivers regarding increased ease in turning from N. Fruit Street onto School Street during busy traffic periods. No crashes have been reported at the intersection since the March 2008 conversion to multi-way STOP: in the three years prior to the conversion there was an average of 1.7 reported crashes per year. Engineering will conduct a follow-up assessment of traffic volumes and operations at this intersection with regard to the appropriateness of multi-way STOP.

D.

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

**DISCUSSION / ACTIONS**: None.

Respectfully submitted,

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

The next Traffic Operations Committee meeting will be held on TUESDAY, April 19, 2011 @ 1:00 PM in the  $2^{ND}$  Floor Conference Room.