

**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD
THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2019
City Commission Room
151 Martin Street, Birmingham, Michigan**

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Multi-Modal Transportation Board held Thursday, January 3, 2019.

Chairperson Johanna Slanga convened the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

01-01-19

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Johanna Slanga; Board Members Katie Schafer, Doug White; Alternate Board Members Daniel Isaksen, Joseph Zane

Absent: Board Members Vice-Chairperson Lara Edwards, Amy Folberg, Daniel Rontal; Student Representative Alex Lindstrom

Administration: Lauren Chapman, City Planner
Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Austin Fletcher, Asst. City Engineer
Scott Grewe, Police Dept. Commander
Carole Salutes, Recording Secretary

Fleis & Vanderbrink ("F&V"):
Julie Kroll

Rowe Engineering:
Jill Bauer
Michael Labadie

01-02-19

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Zane, new alternate board member, introduced himself and discussed a little about his background and his interest in multi-modal transportation.

01-03-19

3. REVIEW AGENDA (no change)

01-04-19

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES, MMTB MEETING OF NOVEMBER 1, 2018

Motion by Mr. White

Seconded by Mr. Isaksen to approve the MMTB Minutes of November 1, 2018 as presented.

Motion carried, 5-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: White, Isaksen, Schafer, Slanga, Zane

Abstain: None

Nays: None

Absent: Edwards, Folberg, Rontal

01-05-19

5. WHOLE FOODS ENTRY AT MAPLE RD. / N. ETON RD.

Mr. Fletcher recalled that in order to encourage higher capacity of vehicles traveling eastbound on Maple Rd., a No Right Turn restriction was added to the site plan for eastbound Maple Rd. vehicles wishing to turn south into the westerly (first) driveway into Whole Foods. (Those customers are expected to continue east and use the second driveway into the Whole Foods property.)

At the request of Whole Foods, Rowe Engineering was hired to study whether there would be a measurable impact on the operation of the intersection if the No Right Turn restriction was removed. The analysis by Rowe, followed by responses from the City's consultant, F&V, were presented. Both consultants, as well as City staff, are in agreement that this change will have minimal impact on the operation of the intersection.

Ms. Bauer from Rowe Engineering said they looked at removing traffic turning into the eastern driveway to the western driveway and what impact that would have on N. Eton Rd. as it comes south and lines up with the westerly entrance to Whole Foods. They did not see any significant change. They also looked at crashes there and one out of 63 crashes was attributed to that movement into the driveway. Therefore, they did not see any decrease in safety if the right turn in is allowed. They recommend placing a sign that directs traffic to yield to any pedestrians that might be crossing that driveway.

It was discussed that the driveway comes in at an odd angle, and is blind. Mr. Labadie recalled that the Whole Foods SYNCRO model showed that if the right turn was allowed, eastbound through traffic would back up, potentially into S. Eton Rd. So Whole Foods agreed to prohibit that. However, they wanted to come back later to look at it again and

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that is what they are doing. Their reason is to try and promote greater usage on the western parking area and reduce the impact on the east entrance.

Mr. Isaksen thought another thing that Whole Foods could consider is making the eastbound driveway one way (in only). All traffic would then have to circle around and leave through the intersection.

Ms. Bauer said about a third of the people entering Whole Foods are already using the western driveway and ignoring the sign.

Mr. Isaksen indicated that to him the only issue is pedestrian safety. He wondered if crosswalk markings could be placed along the sidewalk at the end of the driveway to Whole Foods.

Ms. Ecker explained those markings are more for a street as opposed to going over the top of a sidewalk.

Ms. Kroll with F&V noted they reviewed and were in concurrence with the results and recommendations that were presented by Rowe Engineering. Ms. Kroll added that they don't necessarily recommend putting crosswalk markings on a driveway sidewalk. Also it is a maintenance issue. When she visited the site there was a pedestrian walking underneath the bridge to Whole Foods and she did see people turning right at the intersection. The bigger concern for the pedestrian seemed to be the vehicles that were making a left turn (west) exiting the Whole Foods drive. It is hard to see to the left at that point and people tend to creep up past the stop bar.

There were no comments from members of the public at 6:30 p.m.

It was discussed that vehicles must slow down or stop to allow a pedestrian to finish crossing. However, this slows traffic in an area that already has a lot of congestion.

Chairperson Slanga noted that most other driveways do not have traffic lights. There are lights at this driveway and traffic is being stopped as if it were a street.

Mr. Labadie explained this driveway was signalized because of the bridge that restricts the view.

Ms. Schafer was worried about making a change that is intimately related to the intersection at Maple Rd. and Eton Rd. that is already a problem. If the Board decide upon the change they must do their best to make it safe. Ms. Ecker advised the traffic studies are suggesting that allowing a right turn would not significantly impact that intersection, the traffic, the congestion, or the accidents.

Motion by Mr. Isaksen

Seconded by Mr. Zane to approve the removal of the No Right Turn restriction on eastbound Maple Rd., at the intersection of Maple Rd. and N. Eton Rd., provided that the applicant installs a TURNING VEHICLES WATCH FOR PEDESTRIANS sign to be placed for eastbound Maple Rd. traffic, as recommended.

There were no comments from the audience at 6:40 p.m.

Amended by Ms. Schafer

And accepted by the makers of the motion to revisit this matter in a year.

Amended motion carried, 4-1.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Isaksen, Zane, Schafer, Slanga

Nays: White

Absent: Edwards, Folberg, Rontal

01-06-19

6. MAPLE RD. / N. ETON RD. SIGNAL TIMING

Commander Grewe advised the only complaints the Police Dept. gets regarding Eton Rd. and Maple Rd. is the left turning traffic coming out of the western entrance to Whole Foods to go westbound on Maple Rd. conflicting with the southbound N. Eton Rd. traffic that is making a right turn to go west on Maple Rd. They both think they have the right-of-way and they are both going. Legally, the left turning traffic has to yield the right-of-way to the right turn. A sign has been added in the middle of intersection that says Left Turn Must Yield but he doesn't know that it has helped.

Staff asked the City's transportation consultant, F&V, to study the intersection timing, circulation and flow and recommend any changes or improvements that may be needed.

Ms. Kroll said she was surprised how busy it was when she went out there at 5:30 p.m. It wasn't just the left turns; some of the issues have to do with vehicles queuing underneath the bridge and the short time that is available for the vehicles on the Whole Foods approach. It only allowed for about one vehicle to get through each cycle length which is 120 seconds. If the queue length is six vehicles and only one can get through every 120 seconds you can see why people are getting frustrated. They are taking chances by creeping up on the stop bar and trying to get into the intersection so they can make it through and not have to sit for another two minutes.

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F&V has looked at four different alternatives for the signal head on that approach:

1. Add a new three section signal head for the left turning lane exiting the western drive of Whole Foods with permissive phasing;
2. At same location, add a new four section signal head which is flashing yellow with protected left turn movement. That would provide permissive phasing for when it is not busy and allow the queue lanes to clear. Just during peak periods additional time is needed for the left turn movement;
3. At same location, add a new three section signal head with protected only movement where there would be no permissive turns during the off-peak time. However, the concern would be that vehicles would be sitting when there are no cars when the time could be used for vehicles to clear the intersection;
4. Add a new three section signal head with split phasing where the Whole Foods approach would go separate from the other approaches and they would have no conflicting traffic.

Ms. Kröll advised that after running studies, the best results were achieved with alternative 2. In coordination with this they would do some adjustments to the signal timing on the other approaches because there are some issues with the intersection as a whole that can be improved. This would just be one part of that improvement.

Mr. Isaksen said that after viewing the tables it looks to him as though alternative 1 and alternative 2 have very similar levels of service except that the southbound right turn lane loses some quality of service because of being told to yield.

Ms. Kröll explained there is a really long southbound right turn phase so they took some time away from it and that is why the level of service reduces there. However, they didn't change the time on the northbound left. It still remained at 15 seconds, the max that they had for that approach. The same number of northbound left turn vehicles can get through the intersection whether it is permissive or protected.

Ms. Ecker explained that makes it more orderly because vehicles only go when they have the protected green and the other vehicles are not coming. So the conflicts of the two of them coming at once are not happening as often.

The cost estimate between alternatives 1 and 2 was reviewed. For alternative 1 the estimate was \$8,550 and for alternative 2 it was \$10,260, for a difference of \$1,710.

Mr. Isaksen said his instinct is to proceed incrementally. Alternative 1 seems to be a minimal tweak to try. Chairman Slanga thought if they spend the \$8,500 and they find the need to add the protected status, then they will need to spend it again.

Ms. Kröll said she will take a look to see if some of the issues under the bridge can be fixed. The two intersections are clustered so they operate together. She will try to find how to increase the time under the bridge so backups will be decreased. To increase the

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time under the bridge she will have to reduce the time on S. Eton Rd. They have to make sure that doing something in one place doesn't impact something elsewhere.

Chairperson Slanga opened up discussion from the public at 6:55 p.m.

Mr. Dave Underdown, who is one of the owners of N. Eton Plaza, agreed that is a tough intersection to get through and he is looking forward to anything that can be done to make it move better. The customers are saying they don't come because it is hard to get out of his center at certain times because traffic is so backed up. Anything that can be done would certainly help his tenants.

Mr. Steve Kalczynski, 1883 Shipman Blvd. said when he goes to LA Fitness anywhere between 4 p.m. to 7:30 each evening, that is when he sees the most issues arising with traffic building up. In his opinion if they could put more time into the lights to relieve the pressure on vehicles going east and west, that may resolve a lot of problems. He does not see a lot of pedestrians.

Mr. Zane agreed that giving everybody more time during that period is a difficult balancing act. He would trust the experts on this tough intersection.

Chairperson Slanga said if alternative 1, permissive only, doesn't work it doesn't seem very cost effective to spend almost \$19,000 total for permissive / protected. She thought they need to look at this intersection in total again now that Whole Foods is in and established. The whole intersection is operating below where people would want it, which is one of the reasons why people are frustrated. She hoped F&V could come back with more thoughts and opportunities.

Ms. Kroll noted that issues have been identified on certain movements during certain times of day and they want to see if they can make it better. There will be additional discussion about the S. Eton Rd. leg with regard to pedestrian improvements.

Responding to the chairperson, Commander Grewe said the complaints they have received are strictly about the turning. Typically they are coming from a person that is on N. Eton Rd. making a right turn to go west on Maple Rd. The concern is about being cut off by people making a left turn out of Whole Foods and not yielding to them as they are making a right turn. However, the accident data is not there to support that there is a serious problem. It is just that drivers are frustrated. Maybe taking a step back to look at everything again is probably a better way to go.

Ms. Kroll said they go out in the field as she did today to see if their model matches what is actually happening. By doing the field observations she can pinpoint the issues and then go back to her model and revise it to see if they can fix the problems.

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The consensus of board members was not to make a resolution on this matter, but to request a broader look at what is happening at different times and different days versus the model now that Whole Foods is in.

01-07-19

- 8. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**
(none)

01-08-19

- 9. MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS**

A form was passed out for board members to check what future training topics they may be interested in for future MMTB meetings.

01-09-19

- 11. NEXT MEETING FEBRUARY 7, 2019 at 6 p.m.**

01-10-19

- 12. ADJOURNMENT**

No further business being evident, the board members adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Jana Ecker, Planning Director

Austin Fletcher, Asst. City Engineer