

**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM MULTI-MODAL  
TRANSPORTATION BOARD THURSDAY,  
MARCH 7, 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, March 7, 2019.

Chairwoman Johanna Slanga convened the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chairwoman Johanna Slanga, Vice-Chairwoman Lara Edwards; Board Members Amy Folberg, Daniel Rontal, Katie Schafer, Doug White, Joe Zane; Student Representatives Chris Capone, Bennett Pompei

**Absent:** None

**Present in Audience:** Alternate Board Member Daniel Isaksen

**Administration:** Jana Ecker, Planning Director  
Scott Grewe, Police Commander  
Paul O'Meara, City Engineer  
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist

**Fleis & Vanderbrink ("F&V"):**

Julie Kroll

**2. INTRODUCTIONS**

The Board welcomed new Student Representatives Chris Capone and Bennett Pompei.

**3. REVIEW AGENDA** (no change)

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES, MMTB MEETING OF FEBRUARY 7, 2019**

**Motion by Ms. Folberg**

**Seconded by Mr. Rontal to approve the MMTB Minutes of February 7, 2019 as presented.**

**Motion carried, 7 –  
0.**

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Folberg, Rontal, Schafer, Slanga, White, Zane, Edwards

Nays: None

**5. MAPLE ROAD / S. ETON – PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS**

City Engineer O'Meara reviewed the previous information and discussion on the item.

Julie Kroll, Traffic Consultant with F&V, presented updates on the item, explaining Ms. Kroll reached out to Carissa McQuiston, Non-Motorized Safety Engineering Specialist at MDOT, for a second opinion on whether the intersection becomes more dangerous for pedestrians if the crosswalk is moved from the west side to the east side and a pedestrian crosses against the light, given the possibility a westbound car may not see the pedestrian in advance. Ms. McQuiston said if there is an ongoing problem with pedestrians crossing against the light and vehicles running yellow and red lights, there would likely be an issue no matter what side the crosswalk is on. Ms. McQuiston recommended that the intersection be well-lit, especially underneath the bridge, in order to minimize the concerns regarding pedestrian safety.

City Engineer O'Meara noted the City is working on increasing the lighting under the bridge, but it is requiring ongoing negotiations with CN Railroad, who owns the bridge.

To follow up on Ms. McQuiston's comments, Ms. Kroll reached out to the Birmingham Police Department and asked about the frequency of pedestrian-vehicle issues at this intersection. The Police Department had insufficient data on violations to draw a conclusion. Traffic crash data noted that there has not been a pedestrian crash in this intersection since 2010. Ms. Kroll then went out and observed the intersection on March 5, 2019 between 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. to determine how often vehicles westbound through vehicles entered the intersection on a yellow light and how often vehicles entered the intersection on a red light. With these criteria, Ms. Kroll found 46 vehicles ran yellow lights, and 5 vehicles ran red lights. That said, the traffic volume on the road is 20,000 vehicles per day, so it is a very small percentage of vehicles running yellow or red lights. In addition, the intersection has a small period of time where all lights are red in order to give illegal movements time to clear before any approach is given a green light.

It would be several seconds once a vehicle enters the intersection before a pedestrian going north and a vehicle going west would have a possible interaction, Ms. Kroll explained. The largest concern would be westbound vehicles and southbound pedestrians.

Ms. Schafer suggested that if the crosswalk remains on the west side there is more time before a westbound vehicle coming under the bridge would reach an illegally-crossing pedestrian, whereas on the east side an illegally crossing pedestrian would be immediately in front of a westbound vehicle coming under the bridge.

Ms. Kroll explained that Ms. McQuiston said illegal pedestrian crossings should not be the focus of this analysis, unless illegal pedestrian crossings are a frequent, on-going issue. According to

all available information, it has been determined that there is not a problem with illegal pedestrian crossings at this intersection. Given this, moving the crosswalk to the east side of the intersection will decrease the number of conflicting traffic movements occurring in the intersection. On the west side, pedestrians will always have a conflict with left-turning vehicles; on the east side, there is no conflict with turning vehicles.

Vice-Chairwoman Edwards expressed concern that an adult with a number of children may not be able to cross the intersection in one trip given the smaller size of the proposed splitter island. She noted that a split group of pedestrians, including children, would have to wait an entire light cycle in order to rejoin on the opposite side of the street. In addition, requiring pedestrians to go east-west if they are ultimately trying to go north-south will likely feel cumbersome to those pedestrians. For those reasons Vice-Chairwoman Edwards said she would be concerned about moving the crosswalk to the east side, even though she sees it as enormously beneficial to reduce the potential interactions between pedestrians and turning cars.

Planning Director Ecker noted that moving the intersection to the east side makes it safer overall. She also noted that there is a crosswalk at Whole Foods, should a group of pedestrians want to cross together and not have to risk being split into two groups by the size of the splitter island.

Vice-Chairwoman Edwards agreed that was true, but pointed out that it would require the pedestrians to go east-west again.

Ms. Schafer said the splitter island has evolved into a place where pedestrians must stand if they are trying to cross Maple even though it is small, whereas it was originally designed to be a refuge while crossing.

Chairwoman Slanga asked the Board whether they would like to broaden the discussion beyond Options One and Six, which the Board had narrowed their discussions to at the last meeting.

Mr. Zane replied that the Board seems to prefer Option One to Option Six. He asked if anyone on the Board was advocating for Option Six.

Planning Director Ecker said it stood out that the City's traffic consultants determined Option Six is a more safe option than Option One.

Mr. Zane acknowledged the safety findings for Option Six but also noted that some frequent users of the intersection have expressed a preference for Option One. He added that Option One is half the cost of Option Six, which is not the determining factor but is in its favor combined with the other considerations. He noted that theoretically leaving the crosswalk on the west side is less safe, but that there has not been an issue with pedestrians crossing on the west side in terms of safety.

Vice-Chairwoman Edwards agreed with Mr. Zane's summary. She also repeated Commissioner Nickita's recommendation that intersections be designed in accordance with where it is most convenient for pedestrians to cross. To do otherwise is to increase the likelihood of jaywalking.

Chairwoman Slanga invited the Board to make a motion, since the Board members seemed largely in agreement.

**Motion by Dr. Rontal**

**Seconded by Mr. Zane to accept Option One presented by F&V including a splitter island without moving the crosswalk.**

Chairwoman Slanga asked for public comment.

Daniel Isaksen, 1386 Yorkshire and Alternate Member of the MMTB, said he was not convinced by the argument that pedestrians would always have to cross east-west. He said there is insufficient data to prove the assertion. While he agreed that the goal of minimizing interactions between pedestrians and left-turning vehicles is an important one, moving the crosswalk to the east side makes the intersection less intuitive which could cause drivers and pedestrians to move less appropriately, and thus less safely, move through the space.

Seeing no further comment, Chairwoman Slanga closed public comment.

**Motion carried, 7-0.**

ROLLCALL VOTE

Yeas: Rontal, Zane, Edwards, Folberg, Schafer, Slanga, White

Nays: None

**6. LAKESIDE & MILLRACE – REQUEST FOR STOP SIGN**

Police Commander Scott Grewe reviewed the item.

There were no questions from the Board.

Shawn Mobley-Sulich of 320 Lakeside said that she lives right in front of the intersection being discussed. She noted vehicles approach the intersection at very fast speeds. She added that she is concerned for the safety of pedestrians going through the area, as well as the safety of her disabled son who rides his bicycle in front of her house. She said she would prefer a STOP sign, though a yield sign would be helpful as well.

Marcia Kluczniak, 280 Millrace, explained she is at the corner house on Millrace and agreed with Dr. Mobley-Sulich's assessment of traffic at the intersection in question.

Police Commander Grewe told the Board that:

- The angle of the intersection has no impact the choice between a STOP or yield sign.
- People would be able to see a sign on Millrace.
- The request was for a STOP sign, but the volumes are not there to even warrant a Yield sign. The reason the City is considering a Yield sign is because of the visual obstruction

northbound on Millrace. Police Commander Grewe opined that a Yield sign would sufficiently alert drivers to the visual obstructions and oncoming traffic.

City Engineer O'Meara said there are five houses on Millrace that would be potentially impacted by this change.

Mr. Rontal said a STOP sign would likely be safer given the tree coverage and unusual angles of the roads in the intersection. He opined that a Yield sign would be a half-measure.

Ms. Folberg noted that STOP signs can inadvertently increase the speed of vehicles because drivers often make up for the lost time by speeding up on approach and departure from the sign.

Vice-Chairwoman Edwards suggested building out the easement so that vehicles heading north onto Lakeside are much closer to the STOP or Yield sign and the intersection when they stop which would increase a driver's ability to view the traffic, instead of being very far back on Millrace as would currently occur.

City Engineer O'Meara showed the Board the intersection at Wakefield and Latham as an example of a similar intersection.

Vice-Chairwoman Edwards said the hatching on the road at the STOP sign at Wakefield and Latham would help the situation at Millrace and Lakeside as well. While the STOP sign is in the road, the hatching made it more visually normal and the intersection more intuitive to approach by creating more of a right-angle turn. Vice-Chairwoman Edwards cited Mr. Isaksen's previous comment that more intuitive intersections usually make for safer intersections, and suggested that the best way of slowing down traffic at the intersection could be studied.

Chairwoman Slanga noted that neither the signs nor the possibility of painting hatching in the intersection are permanent. She suggested that the Board could move forward with whatever option it prefers, and would remain open to feedback from residents of the neighborhood. She said that if the Board would like to make incremental changes then it could request a study, as Vice-Chairwoman Edwards advised, into the best paint and the best ways to calm traffic at the intersection.

Police Commander Grewe told the Board there is no record of accidents at this intersection.

**Motion by Ms. Folberg  
Seconded by Mr. Rontal to recommend that a Yield sign be installed on Millrace,  
and the Board will revisit the issue in the next three months to see how it is  
working.**

**Motion carried, 7-0.**

ROLLCALL VOTE

Yeas: Folberg, Rontal, Schafer, Slanga, White, Zane, Edwards

Nays: None

**7. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

(no public)

**8. MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS** (none)

**9. NEXT MEETING APRIL 4, 2019 at 6 p.m.**

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

No further business being evident, the board members adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Jana Ecker, Planning Director

Paul O'Meara, City Engineer

APPROVED