

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Thursday, September 3, 2020
Held Virtually Via Zoom and Telephone Access

Minutes of the virtual regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Multi-Modal Transportation Board held Thursday, September 3, 2020.

Chairwoman Johanna Slanga convened the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Chairwoman Johanna Slanga; Board Members Tom Peard, Katie Schafer, Doug White; Andrew Haig

Absent: Alternate Board Member Joe Zane

Administration: Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Eric Brunk, IT Manager
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist
Austin Fletcher, Assistant City Engineer
Scott Grewe, Police Commander

Fleis & Vandenbrink (F&V): Julie Kroll
Justin Rose

MKSK: Ben Palevsky
Brad Strader

Chairwoman Slanga reviewed the appropriate parliamentary procedures for a virtual meeting. She thanked everyone for their participation and cooperation in advance.

2. Introductions

None.

3. Review Agenda

No changes.

4. Approval of MMTB Minutes of June 4, 2020

Motion by Dr. Schafer

Seconded by Mr. White to approve the MMTB Minutes of June 4, 2020 as submitted.

Motion carried, 5-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: White, Haig, Peard, Slanga, Schafer

Nays: None

5. Transportation Impact Study Requirements for Private Development

Planning Director Ecker and Mr. Strader gave a brief introduction.

Mr. Palevsky, Ms. Kroll and Mr. Strader presented the item.

Dr. Schafer said she would be in favor of encouraging the Planning Board (PB) to use their discretion to look at multi-modal implications of developments under 20,000 sq. ft.

Planning Director Ecker confirmed that the Planning Board always touches at least on pedestrian access, pedestrian flow and bicycle amenities available when reviewing potential developments.

Mr. Strader agreed with Dr. Schafer and said that was part of the reason for bringing this item before the MMTB.

In reply to Mr. Haig, Planning Director Ecker stated that many developments in Birmingham include additions of 20,000 sq. ft. that then require community impact studies by the PB. For scale, she explained that five story developments in town tend to average around 80,000 sq. ft. She said that when developments add significant square footage to existing buildings, community impact studies are often required.

In reply to Chairwoman Slanga, Mr. Strader confirmed the language in the recommendations encompasses consideration of micro-mobility, ridesharing, and other options individuals may use to get to and from a new development.

In reply to Mr. Haig, Mr. Strader noted that the recommendations refer to 'person-trips' instead of 'auto-trips' as one of the ways of acknowledging multi-modal transportation around a development. Mr. Strader said it would probably be helpful to list out some of types of transportation that can be used for 'person-trips'.

Chairwoman Slanga noted that if in the future, for example, deliveries are made either by drones or automated bots then 'person-trips' would no longer encompass all the varieties of traffic that may approach or leave a site. She said that describing these trips as ones taken by 'first-mile, last-mile' devices might be broad enough to accurately capture that particular kind of traffic.

Mr. Haig said Chairwoman Slanga raised important points.

Mr. Strader said that saying 'and any other ways people or goods may be transported to the site' in the recommendations would likely sufficiently include the prospect of automated goods deliveries.

Ms. Kroll noted these guidelines could be updated as future modes of transportation become

more relevant to these considerations.

Seeing no further MMTB comments, Chairwoman Slanga thanked and commended the consultants and City staff for their work on the item.

6. Bicycle Signage

Commander Grewe introduced the item and Ms. Kroll presented the item.

In reply to Chairwoman Slanga, Ms. Kroll stated that there would be two signs installed westbound on Lincoln and two eastbound.

Mr. Haig and Dr. Schafer asked Ms. Kroll whether it might be prudent to also install a sign on S. Eton south of Lincoln as another area where cyclists are often compelled to ride in the road.

Ms. Kroll confirmed she would take a look at that section and that it could be added to the map.

Dr. Schafer said the City should also consider signage on Lincoln west of Southfield. She said the nadir of the hill near Arlington might be an appropriate placement for a sign in that area.

Mr. Strader said Adams near the fire station might be another appropriate location for the signage.

Mr. Peard noted that the stretch of Willits with a single lane of traffic in each direction and on-street parking would also benefit from the signage being discussed. He also noted it would be important to install the signs in a way that would be sufficiently visible to drivers. He cautioned that the signs could be otherwise obscured by on-street parking.

Motion by Dr. Schafer

Seconded by Mr. Haig to recommend approval of the installation of new R4-11 signs to be installed at the following intersections and locations:

- **E. Lincoln and S. Eton**
- **E. Lincoln and Adams**
- **E. Lincoln and Woodward**
- **W. Lincoln and Southfield Road**
- **S. Eton and 14 Mile**
- **W. Lincoln from Arlington to Cranbrook**
- **Willits from Ferndale to Chester**

Motion carried, 5-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Schafer, Haig, White, Peard, Slanga

Nays: None

7. Meeting Open to the Public for items not on the Agenda

In reply to Chairwoman Slanga, Planning Director Ecker explained that the City Commission in

May 2020 explored allowing restaurants to further expand their outdoor dining into roadways. She said that restaurant owners surveyed indicated that they would have a difficult time getting enough supplies and staff to expand their outdoor dining further than had already been permitted, so that solution was not pursued. She stated that the Commission passed a resolution in August 2020 that would permit restaurants to keep and enclose their outdoor dining through Winter 2020. As part of that resolution for Winter 2020 restaurants would also not be required to bring in their outdoor dining furniture overnight. To date, liquor service for outdoor dining has only been permitted through October 31, 2020 via the MLCC and there is hope that will be extended further.

Chairwoman Slanga said there were some roads in Birmingham that could benefit from being closed to vehicular traffic, especially as outdoor dining occupies parts of the road. She cited Pierce next to City Hall as one such area.

Planning Director Ecker stated that area was considered for temporary closure to vehicular traffic in May 2020. With the Maple Street construction, there was concern from the Birmingham Fire Department (BFD) that emergency vehicles might require access to that road. She said she also broached the topic with City Management after speaking with Chairwoman Slanga about it earlier in the week, and reported that there was not enough interest from restaurateurs for doing so.

Chairwoman Slanga compared Birmingham's progress in making the streets more pedestrian-friendly to Traverse City, noting that Traverse City has managed to close a number of areas to vehicular traffic during expanded outdoor dining due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chairwoman Slanga expressed pointed dismay that the City was reluctant to think creatively about making small sections of road which share dining, pedestrian, and vehicular traffic more pedestrian-friendly by restricting vehicular access.

She said the City would be missing an opportunity to better support outdoor dining and pedestrians as outdoor dining extends into the winter in tents and other enclosed spaces.

Addressing Commander Grewe, Chairwoman Slanga said she would still like to hear about the ADA upgrades that will be happening around the City as a result of the Spring 2020 consent agreement signed regarding the matter. She said she would like the MMTB to be better informed of how those areas will be changing and what the MMTB should be aware of when considering mobility and accessibility issues in the future.

Commander Grewe explained that the City would be bringing out-of-date ramps up to current ADA requirements and repairing any ramps in need of maintenance.

Chairwoman Slanga said she would still like a presentation to be made to the MMTB regarding how the Board could be more mobility- and accessibility-inclusive whenever space on an agenda would allow.

Commander Grewe assented to Chairwoman Slanga's request.

Dr. Schafer reported that former MMTB member Daniel Rontal's son was hit by a vehicle while riding his bicycle across Lincoln coming from the alley to the west of Woodward on August 31,

2020. She stated that while Dr. Rontal's son sustained minor injuries the issue was still one of concern. Dr. Schafer said that Dr. Rontal requested, and Dr. Schafer agreed, that the Board should look at the alleys and consider ways to improve their safety.

Planning Director Ecker notified the Board members that alleys along Woodward are being discussed as part of the master planning process. She said she would be happy to submit any feedback regarding improving alley safety to the master planning team, or said the Board members could submit the feedback directly via theBirminghamPlan.com.

Mr. Strader noted that the Board could brainstorm ways of making the entrances to the alleyways more visible from Woodward and ways of making them generally more walkable in order to increase pedestrian and cyclist safety, and then could submit their proposals as a Board to the Planning Board for master plan consideration. He said it could be made more clear to vehicles travelling on the road that pedestrians and cyclists may be crossing those roads as they follow the alley. Mr. Strader said also that if the master plan does not address that topic to the MMTB's satisfaction then the MMTB could resume its study with the aim of recommending improved safety measures to the Commission.

Dr. Schafer noted it would be important for the Board to remember that what the City might want pedestrians and cyclists to do is not always the same as the behaviors they actually exhibit. She cautioned that the safety measures should be designed with real-life behavior in mind.

Chairwoman Slanga expressed concurrence with Dr. Schafer's point. She said the MMTB should consider proactively what the patterns are that are making multi-modal traffic in these areas less safe, and how those patterns can be improved. She ventured that Commander Grewe could possibly share bits of information at each meeting regarding incidents of reduced multi-modal safety so the MMTB could get a better sense of what the most current challenges are. She noted that the MMTB currently has no specific mechanism to hear about issues like that and said it could be beneficial to implement one.

Chairwoman Slanga grouped the need for Board updates on these incidents with her recommendation that the MMTB to be more informed about mobility and accessibility issues around the City, explaining that she wants the MMTB to remain up-to-date on issues within their purview as they arise.

Mr. Haig said he would also be supportive of studying ways to increase alley safety. He continued that he had other comments, prompted by the last page of the current evening's agenda regarding Brown Street. He said he wanted to MMTB to explore more ways of adding friction to roads in order to slow down vehicular traffic speeds. He shared that Pleasant Ridge was currently conducting a study by adding temporary bump-outs to explore their effect on traffic speeds. Mr. Haig said improving bicycle lane markings and crossing markings would also help increase the friction and thus enhance safety. Signage, Mr. Haig said, is often insufficient to the task because drivers become inured to signs. He said that bump-outs would be one example of other more potentially effective options since they require the drivers' notice in order to not damage their vehicles. Adding on to the idea of bump-outs, he said that other physical obstructions would likely achieve similar safety-improving results. He said he has been dissatisfied with recommendations to paint the roads and install signs, seeing them as ineffective, especially as there are often sightline issues. He said Farmington, Pleasant Ridge and Novi are all experimenting with traffic

control measures from which Birmingham could and should learn. He said in general that he would like to see the MMTB presented with more experiments and solutions other local municipalities are implementing and expressed frustration at what he saw as some resistance to innovation within Birmingham.

Mr. Strader replied his team had previously conducted training sessions for the MMTB regarding current best practices on a variety of multi-modal best practices, and said those could continue on topics selected by the MMTB. He said his team would work with City staff to create those trainings.

In reply to Mr. Strader, Planning Director Ecker confirmed that the next MMTB meeting could entail a presentation on current pedestrian and cyclist best practices, which could include some ways of making the alleys safer for non-vehicular traffic. She said she thought it would be a good idea to pursue.

Chairwoman Slanga said that to Mr. Haig's point she would encourage MMTB members to share innovative multi-modal ideas they find intriguing from other communities, and welcomed MMTB members, staff and members of the public to continue sharing those ideas with the Board.

Planning Director Ecker echoed Chairwoman Slanga. She added in reply to Mr. Haig that new ideas are always worth discussing, even if there is initial resistance to their consideration at the City level.

Chairwoman Slanga agreed and said the MMTB is very open to those discussions.

8. Miscellaneous Communications

Included in the agenda packet, a member of the public expressed satisfaction with signs that were added to Brown Street.

9. Next Meeting – October 1, 2020

10. Adjournment

No further business being evident, the board members adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Jana Ecker, Planning Director

Austin Fletcher, Assistant City Engineer