

DRAFT

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Held Virtually Via Zoom and Telephone Access

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Multi-Modal Transportation Board held Thursday, February 4, 2021.

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

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Johanna Slanga (located in Bloomfield Hills, MI); Board Members Andrew Haig (located in Birmingham, MI), David Hocker (located in Birmingham, MI), David Lurie (located in Naples, FL), Tom Peard (located in Birmingham, MI), Katie Schafer (located in Birmingham, MI)

Absent: Board Member Doug White; Alternate Board Member Joe Zane

Administration: Jana Ecker, Planning Director ("PD")
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist
Scott Grewe, Police Operations Commander
Jim Surhigh, Consulting City Engineer
Scott Zielinski, Assistant City Engineer

Fleis & Vandenbrink (F&V):

Julie Kroll

MKSK:

Ben Palevsky
Brad Strader

2. Introductions

None.

3. Review Agenda

4. Approval of MMTB Minutes of December 3, 2020

Mr. Haig recommended a short summary of his question be added to the first paragraph of the "Meeting Open to the Public for items not on the Agenda" section on page six of the minutes.

Motion by Mr. Haig

Seconded by Mr. Lurie to approve the MMTB Minutes of December 3, 2020 as amended.

Motion carried, 6-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Haig, Lurie, Peard, Hocker, Schafer, Slanga

Nays: None

5. Transportation Agency Coordination

A) Mobility Oriented Development Study Overview

Presented by Ben Stupka, RTA

Assisted by Robert Cramer, SMART

PD Ecker introduced the speakers. Mr. Stupka presented the item.

Chair Slanga said she was interested in the ways Birmingham's multi-modal efforts can connect to the multi-modal efforts in nearby communities.

Mr. Stupka said that this is a planning document which lays out a broad overview of some potential recommendations. The particulars would be decided on at a later date with recommendations and guidance provided by City staff.

Mr. Cramer explained that the goal is to improve the effectiveness of the multi-modal infrastructure that already exists in Birmingham. He said that increasing residential density is not a mandate of the study; rather, these recommendations would simply support Birmingham in increasing its residential density if it so chose.

Mr. Haig said he was in favor of the goal of connecting Birmingham across Woodward multi-modally.

Chair Slanga said she was supportive of the Board having the opportunity to discuss new and diverse ideas in general, even if not everyone agreed with every concept raised.

Mr. Cramer said that the more discourse there is between SMART, the RTA, and Birmingham, the more opportunities there are for the former two organizations to support the latter in achieving its community priorities.

B) Woodward Avenue Issues and Opportunities – A Discussion with MDOT

Lori Swanson, MDOT

Tom Pozolo, MDOT

Jim Schultz, MDOT

PD Ecker introduced the conversation.

Mr. Schultz and Ms. Swanson spoke.

Board members generally agreed that they would like Woodward to become safer for pedestrians and for the vehicle speeds to be slowed along Woodward like they are in Ferndale.

Mr. Lurie commented that the vehicle noise along Woodward is a nuisance to Birmingham

residents. He said vehicles speed along Woodward in the summer, contributing to the noise.

Ms. Swanson said she would send MDOT's road diet checklist to PD Ecker.

Mr. Pozzolo and Ms. Swanson said MDOT would not take traffic counts of Woodward while most people are still working from home because the counts would not be representative.

Mr. Peard and Mr. Lurie asked about the possibilities of reopening the underground pedestrian tunnels or depressing the traffic along Woodward for the Birmingham stretch to leave the ground level to pedestrians.

The MDOT representatives did not address the possibility of reopening the pedestrian tunnels.

Mr. Schultz said MDOT depressed traffic at 696 and Woodward and said he doubted that was the outcome Birmingham residents would want.

In reply to Mr. Schultz, PD Ecker said Birmingham would be unlikely to install pedestrian bridges over Woodward because the City would prefer to redesign the at grade crossings to slow traffic and keep pedestrians at street level.

Chair Slanga expressed concern that slowing speeds along Woodward in Ferndale would lead to drivers increasing their speeds once they cleared Ferndale's city limits. She noted this would likely lead to unsafer vehicle speeds along Woodward north of Ferndale. She advocated MDOT taking a more holistic approach to making Woodward safer from Ferndale to Birmingham.

In reply to Chair Slanga, Mr. Schultz said he would look into what it would take for MDOT to conduct a study of the Woodward corridor from Ferndale to Birmingham. He said he would get the information to PD Ecker.

Chair Slanga thanked the speakers.

Ms. Kroll stated she was working with the City and MDOT on the following items and would be bringing the information before the Board in the near future: improving the intersection near the Peabody Redevelopment heading south on Woodward, increasing pedestrian safety measures at Elm and Woodward, and increasing pedestrian safety measures at Forest and Woodward.

6. 2021 Construction Projects

PD Ecker introduced the conversation.

Consulting City Engineer Surhigh and Assistant City Engineer Zielinski provided an overview of the upcoming projects.

Mr. Haig asked that the Engineering Department look at whether it would make sense to install a bike path along Townsend, and to report back with the age of the roads being reconstructed. He said he was interested in the road life span as a real-life data point to compare to the estimated road life spans provided in the Ad Hoc Unimproved Streets Study Committee report.

In response to Mr. Lurie, Assistant City Engineer Zielinski said the end of Bird Street at the beginning of the alley seemed largely to be ADA compliant, but may not be towards the end of the alley. He said the Engineering Department can ensure during the upcoming construction that the area where Bird and the alley meets is compliant with current ADA standards. He said the Engineering Department might also be able to make sure that the extent of the alley is updated to be compliant with current ADA standards.

After discussion, Chair Slanga recommended that Board members visit the intersection at Southfield and Maple sometime over the next couple of months to gather observations about the safety of the layout of the truck apron and pedestrian areas.

Mr. Peard recommended that each Board member visit the Southfield and Maple intersection twice - once in a vehicle and once as a pedestrian - in order to get a better understanding of the layout from both perspectives.

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

8. Miscellaneous Communications

PD Ecker advised the Board that members could send concerns about sidewalk snow removal to her. She said she would then send those concerns on to the Department of Public Services, and they would contact the responsible parties and resolve the issue.

9. Next Meeting – March 4, 2021

10. Adjournment

No further business being evident, the board members adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Jana Ecker, Planning Director