

City of Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee
Monthly Meeting, July 8, 2014

MINUTES

1. The meeting convened at 7:30pm with the following members in attendance: Joe Edgell, Liz Cattaneo, Sheryl Gross-Glaser, and Kacy Kostiuk.
2. There were no members of the public present and thus no public comments.
3. Councilmember Jarrett Smith (Ward 5) was invited to speak to the committee.
 - a. He noted that the intersection of Kennebec, Houston, and Sligo Creek Parkway is an area of concern for residents. People complain that it is a dangerous intersection. Joe suggested that the committee could look into collision data for this location to see whether this perception of lack of safety matches the data on accidents.
 - b. Jarrett discussed a few requests from residents for traffic-calming measures:
 - i. One location where residents want traffic calming is on Domer Ave. He said that the incline is too steep for speed bumps, but there may be another option. There is a lot of cut-through traffic on the street, and it is expected to get worse with the closing of Carroll Ave for work on the bridge.
 - ii. Residents have also mentioned a need for traffic calming on Flower Ave. Joe asked if residents have something specific in mind when they say they want “traffic calming.” Jarrett said that most people probably don’t; they just want cars to slow down.
 - iii. Joe noted that a data monitoring system was used on Elm Ave, and data showed that most cars were not going over the speed limit, despite the perception of residents that everyone was going really fast. Jarrett said that he would suggest that the Safe Roadways Committee look at data like this and perhaps help show people that the data may not support a need for traffic-calming measures. He said that the committee could point out the options and the costs to see if it makes sense economically. Liz noted that it’s important to balance safety and the perception of safety, as well as the reality – a holistic picture.
 - c. Jarrett asked about the effectiveness of raised crosswalks. Joe pointed out that the installation of speed humps in Takoma Park causes a lip next to them, making it very difficult for cyclists. It is more expensive to cut into the street and pave to the bump for a smooth transition.
 - d. Jarrett discussed Piney Branch Ave, which is controlled by the state. The state put up new pedestrian lights at the intersection of Piney Branch and Flower Aves but never turned them on. The city has sent a letter to SHA about this, but SHA has said that the contract is finished and the work done. These are brand-new signals that don’t work, and it is confusing for pedestrians. Liz volunteered to e-mail Jessie Carpenter to ask for a copy of that letter and send it to the committee.
 - e. Joe asked Jarrett what he thought of asking SHA to make the state highways end at the city borders so that the city would have control of its major roadways.

- i. Jarrett discussed the exchange with SHA a few years ago that resulted in SHA granting Flower Ave to be city-operated in exchange for agreeing that 410 was SHA-controlled. This resulted in an MOU from the state acknowledging that 410 is the state's responsibility. The city also had to sign an MOU with the county for Flower Ave because the city is going to install a sidewalk for the county (with some money from the county).
 - ii. Jarrett noted that the city has limited financial resources. The tax base is primarily from single-family homes, as there is only a small business district in Takoma Park. He was concerned that taking responsibility for maintenance on SHA roads might cause a financial hardship on the city and taxpayers. Jarrett noted that the state should give highway-user revenue to the city, but the state may not give a large amount if they say they don't have it. Jarrett said he might support the exchange of SHA roads to the city if they state would agree to give some regular money to the city for maintenance and repairs.
 - iii. Jarrett noted that the bridge on Carroll Ave has terrible potholes and holes in the sidewalk. He also discussed the need for crosswalks on Carroll Ave. Joe and Kacy noted problems with the pedestrian cross signals at the Flower/Carroll intersection – not accessible and not working.
 - iv. Sheryl noted that typically SHA hates crosswalks because people use them, which may result in accidents.
 - v. Joe said that the problem the city keeps running into with improving bike and pedestrian access continues to be the situation with SHA. Jarrett noted that the city council has put a lot of energy into dealing with issues with the SHA; the city tries to have meetings with people on different levels and puts a lot of effort and time into these efforts. He said that each time they do this, they are hopeful that the problems have been resolved, but they reappear again after a short period.
 - vi. Sheryl asked if there is any unanimity among municipalities that have similar issues with SHA. Jarrett said there may be. He does not know why the SHA seems to feel it can keep ignoring requests from Takoma Park.
 - vii. Sheryl commented that a change is needed in how the state and city work together. Sheryl suggested adopting the NACTO guide. Joe pointed out that SHA will follow their own policies or desires if it conflicts with other policies, as he has experienced with bike lanes in the past.
 - f. Jarrett said that the planned Purple Line stop at the intersection of Aryliss and Piney Branch is something for the committee to keep an eye on. This might become a bottleneck with pedestrians trying to cross to get to the station.
 - g. Joe asked how Jarrett felt about the city just going out and doing what needs to be done (i.e. painting crosswalks, etc.). Jarrett said the cost and budget would have to be considered for this.
 - h. Joe pointed out that there are ADA access issues on the sidewalks with snow but also with growth from large plants. Joe suggested prioritizing this issue with the Department of Public Works.
4. Councilmember Kate Stewart (Ward 3) arrived and spoke to the committee.

- i. Kate is the newest member of the city council.
- ii. Liz noted that other councilmembers have sent out messages to their constituents asking people to consider applying to be on the Safe Roadways Committee. Liz volunteered to send Kate a copy of this e-mail in case she would like to send a copy to her constituents.
- iii. Kate said that most of the issues in her ward usually have to do with SHA.
 - 1. She noted that there have been concerns related to Manor Circle because there are two people with disabilities living there. The intersection with 410 and Manor Circle is an area of concern; residents feel there needs to be better pedestrian signage and an improved sidewalk strip there that allows for wheelchair access. A crosswalk there would also aid kids who cross to access Forest Park or Spring Park. She said there are also problems with the intersection of Manor Circle and Carroll Ave.
 - 2. Kate noted that the intersection of Sycamore and Ethan Allen by the Coop is an ongoing issue. Cars get backed up and people can't cross there without a crosswalk. This is also an SHA issue.
 - 3. There have been some concerns on Westmoreland with the timing of lights at the Takoma Junction intersection. Kate has been talking with Tim Male about this, as it crosses both of their wards.
 - 4. Kate said that Tim has put in a crosswalk request for a location on Carroll by the intersection with Sherman Ave. She mentioned the ongoing challenges of working with SHA and suggested that it might be better to pull together all of the issues in the city and submit to SHA as a comprehensive request/plan
 - 5. Kate noted that two –possibly three – new businesses will be opening at the Takoma Junction. The Spring Mill Bakery and the MAD Fitness Center are both opening soon. There is some interest from a Thai restaurant. She also noted that the mural on Grant Ave was taken down, and she did not know about it. Joe said that there have been and will be many changes at the location, but it seems like they are more piecemeal rather than a comprehensive plan.
 - 6. Kate noted that she would want to investigate what the consequences would be for the city doing things themselves. Kate feels that it's easy for SHA to ignore things when there's one small area requesting something. If the city council and maybe even county council got together and told SHA what all of their priority needs were, the request might be taken more seriously.
- iv. Kate said that she would like to think more about creative bike lanes and what could be done. DC is doing so many interesting things, and it would be nice to do those type of things in Takoma Park. There could be some opportunities on New Hampshire Ave, and this might be an area for proposing ideas to SHA. There may be some more flexibility there.

1. 6450 is an empty location on New Hampshire and a laundromat is going to go in. The city council just agreed to submit a grant proposal to upgrade this location so that it is nicer. There will be a new playground there; there already are community gardens and the rec center.
 2. Joe suggested changing the laws to allow bikes on sidewalks. It's not possible to get to the rec center unless there is a bike lane.
 - v. Kate suggested finding a way to work with rec department to give SSL hours or something else so that a mini "job corps" of young people could be created to help with shoveling in the wintertime – perhaps also with raking leaves. This could also help serve senior citizens.
 - vi. Busboys & Poets is coming in, and more traffic is expected in Old Town Takoma. Kate is exploring whether the city should have a parking authority. There are many different versions of this, but it would involve an entity that looks at parking to assess how many spots available, what's turnover, supply, etc. It would be self-sustaining, with revenue going back into the parking authority, but maybe it could also go to pay for bike lanes and other things.
 1. Sheryl asked if it could not be its own entity but part of something else. San Francisco's Department of Transportation has a more holistic approach because it focuses on more things. Kate said that the nice thing about creating a separate entity is that it wouldn't add any full-time employees to the city staff because this is difficult and costs a lot. It would be a contract with the city, and the authority would report to the city manager and council.
 2. Joe voiced a concern that a parking authority might have an interest in maintaining parking spaces, whereas the city might want to have more green space or bike lanes. If the spots generate revenue, there may be a reason for a separate entity to fight getting rid of them for bike lanes or other changes.
 3. Kate suggested that the city would have a chance to create the authority and structure the way it wanted, perhaps taking this type of thing into consideration.
 - vii. Kate noted that the city has stopped using the traffic camera revenue to fund police officers and sidewalks. Joe said Daryl Braithwaite said it was being used for sidewalks, so he will double-check with her.
 - viii. Kate noted that there are some issues with access in the Pinecrest neighborhood. She also said there are a lot of people using bikeshare at the Westmoreland location.
5. Sheryl did not have anything to report related to the questions she had for the police. She will contact them and report back later.
 6. Joe discussed the terms of the Safe Roadway Committee members and the three new applicants from Ward 6 who are interested in being a part of the committee. The committee members did not express any concern about the applicants.
 7. Joe reminded the committee that the next meeting would focus on priorities and planning for the coming year. He also invited committee members to submit topics for future agendas.

8. Sheryl moved to approve the meeting agenda for this meeting; Kacy seconded the motion. All members in attendance voted to approve the agenda.
9. Joe asked Kacy to add a note to the meeting minutes from June that made it clear that no voting items were handled after the quorum was lost. With this change planned, Liz moved to approve the minutes. Sheryl seconded the motion. All members in attendance voted to approve the meeting minutes.
10. The meeting was adjourned at 9:04pm.