

**City of Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee
Monthly Meeting, January 9, 2014**

MINUTES

1. The meeting convened at 7:30pm with the following committee members in attendance: Kacy Kostiuk; Sylvia Borenstein; Liz Cattaneo; Scott Williams; Joe Edgell; and Ryan Morden.
2. The committee reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting. Scott moved to approve the minutes. Sylvia seconded that motion. The committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.
3. Joe asked if anyone had additions or changes to the planned agenda for this meeting. There was unanimous consent to approve the agenda without any changes. The approved agenda is:
 - (a) Housekeeping (agenda and last month's meeting-minutes approval) – 5 mins (Joe)
 - (b) Public comments (if any) – 5 mins (Public)
 - (c) Introductory comments by committee members – 5 mins (All)
 - (d) Mayor Bruce Williams to Discuss City-Wide Issues (30 mins) (All)
 - (e) Subcommittee Reports – 30 mins (All)
 - (1) Ped & Bike (Scott, Ryan, Sheryl, Liz, Jason)
 - (2) Outreach (Scott, Liz, Kacy)
 - (3) Data Gathering (Sylvia, Kacy, Joe)
 - (4) Law & Regulation (Ryan, Sylvia, Joe)
 - (f) Debrief from Council Member Smith Discussion – 5 min (Ryan)
 - (g) Bikeshare Rack – 5 min (Ryan)
 - (h) Next month's meeting date & agenda suggestions – 5 mins
4. The committee invited Mayor Bruce Williams to speak about city-wide roadways issues and ways he thought the committee could provide useful support and/or information to the city council.
 - a. Joe gave brief overview of the committee's progress so far.
 - b. Mayor Williams asked if the committee was interested in addressing the city council. Joe said that at minimum, the committee plans to produce a yearly report for the council but that committee members were also considering producing a master plan for the city and/or may want to address the council about other issues prior to the yearly report.
 - c. Committee members introduced themselves to Mayor Williams and told a bit about their interests and background.
 - d. Mayor Williams began his remarks by addressing pedestrian issues related to sidewalks. He explained that the city council gets requests from individuals and groups for new/different sidewalks. He noted that historically, it had been a challenge to fund these requests because money had not previously been set aside for these improvements. Now that the city uses speed camera funds that can be appropriated for these requests.
 - i. Mayor Williams noted that the two main focuses of the city council regarding sidewalks have been on creating sidewalks where they don't exist so that there is a connected network of sidewalks, and revamping existing sidewalks to comply with ADA regulations.
 - ii. The city council has committed money each year to meet these needs. He estimated that the total was approximately \$500,000 or \$600,000 per year for new sidewalks and ADA compliance changes. Mayor Williams said that the council is committed to finding ways to continue to build new sidewalks in a

priority where they are most needed. He noted that any way the Safe Roadways Committee could contribute to this process would be helpful.

- iii. Sylvia asked what the process was for determining sidewalk priorities. Mayor Williams said the process include a review of the overall network and requests from individuals or groups/associations. He noted that even after a request comes in and is approved, it takes time to design and build the new sidewalk -- possibly up to two years before the final sidewalk is produced.
- iv. Joe asked if Daryl Braithwaite, public works director, would have a list of sidewalk priorities that she could share with the committee. Mayor Williams said that she should be able to share that and added that there is also a list related to street priorities.
- v. Mayor Williams pointed out that storm-water drains and connections to existing sidewalks need to be considered during the building of new sidewalks. He also noted that it is often more cost- and time-efficient to make ADA adjustments to existing areas of sidewalk in the area where a new sidewalk is being built because the equipment is already available, even if those sidewalks are newer than other existing sidewalks located elsewhere.
- vi. Liz asked if there is separate funding for ADA compliance, and Mayor Williams said that there is no additional funding for this. It comes from the funds generated by the speed cameras in the city.
- vii. Mayor Williams said that about four years ago, the council worked with consultants who estimated that it would cost about \$45 million to make all the needed changes and additions to the city sidewalks. He said the real cost would actually be much higher because this estimate did not include sidewalks on state-controlled roads. At that time, the city thought that the state would maintain the sidewalks they had built along the state roads, but they later learned this will not be the case.
- viii. Mayor Williams said that the speed cameras are not just for generating revenue but have been successful in reducing accidents. The annual police report a couple of years ago, prior to speed cameras being installed on New Hampshire Ave, reported 423 accidents on the portion of the road in the City of Takoma Park. After the installation of the cameras, a later police report recorded only 10 accidents. Joe noted that this is an example of data correlation rather than cause and effect, and pointed out that the area where the accidents were being measured was much larger than just the spot with the cameras and that it was not possible to deduce that the cameras alone caused this reduction.
- ix. Mayor Williams discussed the construction work on the bridge on New Hampshire. He said the contractor appears to have made some mistakes and that he thinks the State Highway Association is considering hiring someone else for the job. As a result, the project is temporarily on hold.
 1. Joe noted that the Takoma Park New Hampshire Avenue Charrette put forward a proposal in the past for beautifying the New Hampshire corridor. As part of that proposal, main traffic lanes on New Hampshire would be reduced to two lanes per side with the third lane used as a local-access lane, and the SHA rejected the proposal with the answer that restricting traffic to the two lanes plus one concept would result in too much congestion. However, now the lanes are restricted to only two lanes on each side, and it does not appear that there has been massive congestion as a result. Joe said that he hopes the council would consider using this as an example to the SHA that a local lane on New Hampshire Ave could work.

- x. Liz asked if there would be more fixed-location traffic cameras in the future. Mayor Williams said at this point there have not been more proposed. Two were put on Carroll, one removed was then moved to New Hampshire Ave. If there's a request, the police study it and see if it's worth it. Costs can be high.
- xi. Mayor Williams offered to provide the committee with a link to the police's annual report, where there are figures related to the accident decrease on New Hampshire Ave during the period when the speed cameras were installed.
- xii. Mayor Williams said it would be helpful if the committee looked at and gave recommendations regarding how signs regarding crosswalks could be more effective at protecting pedestrians -- i.e. where those signs are best located, the possibility of starting a local campaign to make people aware of these signs, etc. It was noted that populations in some other states seem to yield to pedestrians more than people in our area do
 - 1. Last month Joe researched signs and found they aren't generally very effective. He feels that education changes in law are necessary to improve the pedestrian safety issues regarding crosswalks (for example, drivers aren't required to stop unless the pedestrian steps off the curb (and you can't step out in front of a car legally either).
 - 2. Sylvia asked whether police could set up a patrol near a crosswalk and pull over to give warnings or talk with drivers about stopping for pedestrians. This was done in Rockville recently and seemed helpful. Liz suggested that it would be helpful if the Takoma Park Police Department could do something like this.
- xiii. Mayor Williams discussed the International Walk to School Day, which happens every fall and involves more or less all the elementary kids in Takoma Park. He noted that transportation to school is a double-edged sword: if parents drive kids to school, they encounter congestion and contribute to even more congestion, but because of that congestion, they may feel it's not safe for kids to walk to school. The city provides crossing guards, and if they meet the requirements of the county, those positions are reimbursed by the county. The two crossing guards at Takoma Junction were recently added at the request of parents.
- xiv. Mayor Williams noted that difficulty of getting crosswalks on the state highways in Takoma Park. He said it took about 15 years to get the crosswalk put in near the Capitol City Cheesecake. He said the SHA often responds to requests by saying the spot doesn't warrant a crosswalk based on their criteria, so he wonders if their criteria need to be reconsidered for certain urban locations. It has also been difficult getting support or attention from the SHA for the installation of way-finding signs that say things like "hospital" or "college." SHA has claimed that signs need to be extremely large based on their overall regulations for state highways, but this doesn't make sense for an urban area with little space on the sides of the road.
- xv. Mayor Williams asked what the committee thought about the location of the BikeShare racks in front of the gazebo in downtown Takoma Park. Based on discussions at the previous meeting and via e-mail, the committee members agreed that this was not a concern for them. Mayor Williams noted that it could cost up to \$25,000 to move the rack but that there have been requests from the community, including a petition. The committee members unanimously said they felt it would be best to channel existing energy and money into building the BikeShare system and getting more stations, including one at the Metro station, rather than moving an existing station.

- xvi. Mayor Williams said that current state law states that unless specified otherwise, it is illegal to ride a bike on a sidewalk. There was a bill to switch it around to be legal unless specified otherwise. Mayor Williams said this might be something to work on if the committee was interested. Joe suggested that perhaps it should be authorized to ride on the sidewalk on Ethan Allen Ave; Seth asked about pedestrian safety. Sylvia noted that it might be better to improve the roads for bicyclists and wondered whether allowing people to bike on the sidewalk might delay needed improvements to the roads.
- xvii. Mayor Williams said that planning for the purple line still moving forward but that the Town of Chevy Chase has decided to authorize hiring an attorney to fight the purple line construction. If everything proceeds as currently planned, construction will start in 2015 and be completed by 2020. That will change transit, connections, and how everyone thinks about our roadway systems. Mayor Williams also noted that the purple line could help increase business to our local commercial area, which may help increase revenue for the city. However, he also noted that it will be important to protect small businesses.
 - 1. Joe asked about the possibility of bus rapid transit on New Hampshire Ave. Mayor Williams said the city council and the state are working to reconcile their different visions. The city's vision includes rapid bus transit on New Hampshire Ave, and it seems like the state will work with them on this.
- xviii. Mayor Williams said that he has heard complaints about the RideOn bus system not running on time and not having functional apps. He asked if the committee members had observed similar things. The committee had previously discussed this issue amongst itself and noted that this was an issue for many people. Scott told Mayor Williams that the committee had not decided to pursue this issue because it seemed like there wasn't much the committee could do to change this. Mayor Williams said that if the issue is important, the committee could pursue work on it and talk with the council about it.
 - 1. Joe brought up the concern that the committee did not want to "get ahead" of the council and asked if the best procedure for issues such as this would be to address the council or to write an independent letter and send it to RideOn. Mayor Williams said it was best for the committee to take recommendations and questions to the city council, since it can be confusing for outside parties if the committee acts independently.
 - 2. Joe suggested that in addition to an annual report, the committee might want to create one or more committee position papers that are presented to the city council when a "hot issue" comes up, such as the RideOn issue.
- xix. Mayor Williams said that the SHA is continuing to refine the details on the project of repairing the Carroll Ave bridge. The city has agreed not to close the nearby section of Sligo Creek on Sundays during construction so that this can be used as a detour route during the period of the construction. This portion of Sligo Creek Ave is usually closed to motorized vehicular traffic on Sundays. The bridge is supposed to be closed for one year. Joe asked whether there was concern that Sligo Creek Ave in this section may not resume being closed on Sundays after it is opened for this project; Mayor Williams said he does not think this will be a problem. Joe mentioned that there is currently a problem with the gate closing this section of Sligo Creek Ave where it meets Maple Ave. The gates have been closed using a chain, but this makes it impossible for bikers and walkers to get through without going off the road onto the grass. Joe said that he

will send a picture of this to Mayor Williams. Ryan asked whether there would be traffic lights installed by the hospital on Maple during the construction; Mayor Williams said he did not know of plans related to this. SHA has agreed to postpone work on the bridge until the New Hampshire Ave project is finished.

- xx. Kacy asked about aesthetic considerations for the roadways. Mayor Williams said that a group came to present at a city council meeting during the summer and presented a long PowerPoint Presentation related to their aesthetic concerns for the sidewalk improvements. One complaint was that the new nubby mats on the curbs were being painted bright yellow rather than the color(s) they had previously been. The group requested consistency, and the city council agreed to paint these mats red in the future, rather than yellow. Mayor Williams said they are in the process of naming people to work on the aesthetics concerns with the goal of prioritizing a few specific things.
 - 1. Joe noted that things like artsy bike racks, sidewalks with mosaics, etc., can be really attractive and improve the feel of the roadways. Mayor Williams noted that the major barrier is cost. He also noted that there is an amazing amount of variation in possible sidewalk materials to be used and that it can get very complicated.
 - xxi. Scott asked what successful committees have done in the past and what this committee might be able to learn from this. Mayor Williams suggested that the committee be proactive and create chances to talk with the city council. He noted that the committee does not have to wait a year to communicate in the annual report but can address the council at any time, even if just in an e-mail. He said it is probably too late to propose state legislation this year but that that any work for next year should begin soon because issues need to be discussed and decided upon before July in order to be ready to take them to the state legislature.
 - xxii. Sylvia asked about the campaign to reduce/eliminate the number of people standing in medians and asking for money from people in cars. Mayor Williams said the campaign seems to be helping but that the cold weather might also be an explanation for the reduction in people on the medians recently. Mayor Williams noted that the firefighters have their fill-a-boot campaign for muscular dystrophy and that that campaign is a major reason that soliciting from the median is not outlawed.
 - xxiii. Ryan asked if there were any timing issues to be aware of in terms of city-specific issues (rather than state ones), and Mayor Williams said that there were no specific timing issues to be aware of.
 - xxiv. Mayor Williams noted that Kay Daniels-Cohen (council member for ward 3) is having worsening health problems and therefore likely may not be available to speak with the committee. He offered to address any questions or concerns related to issues in ward 3 himself.
- e. Mayor Williams left the meeting. He was scheduled in the agenda to speak for approximately 30 minutes but spoke for nearly an hour. Joe asked the committee if it seemed useful to continue to have city council members speak to the group. He said he had let him speak for longer because it seemed useful and because he was the mayor and could provide a broad overarching perspective but that he could hold future council members to the amount of time set on the agenda, if desired. The committee unanimously agreed that it was helpful to have council members address the committee but that for the sake of committee productivity, it would be best to limit presentations from future speakers to 30 minutes unless the committee voted during that meeting to extend the time for the speaker.

- f. Each subcommittee gave a brief report:
 - i. The pedestrian and bike subcommittee had no business to report this month, as it had not yet formally gotten started on its initiatives.
 - ii. The outreach subcommittee gave a brief overview of its activities and plans.
 - 1. Kacy said the subcommittee had decided to focus on three main areas, including soliciting more widespread input from the community (through a survey and tables at community events), improving outreach materials (by reviewing existing materials, recommending new ones, and working with other groups with similar interests), and increasing community support for safe roadways initiatives (through tables at events, the survey, and working with other community groups).
 - 2. Kacy said that the group's next steps included:
 - a. Determining goals and talking points for conversations with community groups and citizens at community events;
 - b. Contacting city staff and/or council members to get information about methodology and dissemination methods used for previous surveys;
 - c. Developing a list of possible community events to attend and finding out steps and timing required to arrange to have a table at these events;
 - d. Making a list of existing roadways materials to review; and
 - e. Making a list of organizations/groups to reach out to and what type of collaboration or questions might be addressed to whom.
 - 3. Scott said that it would be beneficial to try to connect with similar roadways committees in the county. Liz said that she has contacts on a Silver Spring committee and a Kensington committee and will talk with them about this possibility. Joe said it might be worthwhile to have a joint meeting with these other groups sometime.
 - 4. Joe said that he asked Jessie Carpenter for an official committee e-mail address (something like "saferoadways@takomapark.md.gov). She has agreed to create one that all community members can access and can use for things related to surveys and/or outreach. Jessie can also put a link to a survey on the city webpage if desired.
 - 5. Joe said that he set up a Twitter account for the committee. He suggested that the outreach committee talk about how/if there are ways the committee might want to use the account. It is @tpsaferoads and is currently a private account with nothing visible publicly.
- g. The planned end time for the meeting (9 p.m.) was reached at this point. Kacy moved to extend the meeting by 15 minutes. Sylvia seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously with the caveat that the meeting would not be extended for an additional 15 minutes afterwards.
- h. Subcommittee reports continued:
 - i. The data-gathering subcommittee gave a brief overview of its progress.
 - 1. Sylvia said that the committee had created a list of data-collection tools that incorporate government and/or citizen input. She said the committee has been assessing the possible effectiveness of each of these tools. Joe said that it will be necessary to get buy-in from the city in order to pursue use of most of these tools.
 - 2. Kacy said that she has an interest in examining other sources of research and data, such as utilizing data that is related to issues in Takoma Park

but was collected elsewhere and/or considering possible solutions other cities have used.

3. Scott said that the Safe Routes to School coordinator sends surveys home with kids each year and that the committee might want to request a copy of their data.
 4. Sylvia said the subcommittee plans to meet with city staff to discuss data that is already available and consider ways additional tools might be useful.
- ii. The subcommittee on law and regulation gave a brief report.
 1. Sylvia said that she read the municipal code and saw a few areas that could be focused upon, including road illumination and traffic-calming devices. She said she was concerned about the wording related to traffic-calming devices, as it seemed like this was primarily at the discretion of the city without much citizen input. She also noted that there were not any specifics listed related to road illumination (such as where lights should go and/or how this should be determined).
 2. Sylvia said that the legislative session for the state just got started, but she has not had a chance to look at what bills are going forward. Joe asked committee members to forward to the committee any e-mails about roadways-related laws that they might receive from representatives.
 - i. Ryan attended the previous city council meeting and gave a brief report. He said that Bob Sheldon again brought up the issue of the bikeshare station by the gazebo. A petition to move this station was created, and 15 area businesses signed it.
 - i. Committee members agreed that they did not support moving the bikeshare station and would rather that money was spent to expand and improve the bikeshare system.
 - ii. Joe suggested that this might be the committee's first position paper to the city council. Ryan questioned whether addressing this directly would be giving more credence to it and create more talk about the issue. Joe said he felt a counterpoint to the people complaining about the station might be needed. Ryan said he would work on a draft of a position paper and would send it to the committee via e-mail for review, with the goal of trying to send it to the city council before the committee's next monthly meeting.
 - j. Ryan reported on a meeting with ward 5 council member Jarrett Smith. He said that Jarrett is interested in ways to engage the student body at Washington Adventist University and connect them to the rest of the community more through transportation and other means. They also discussed the Flower Ave Green Street Project, which will aim to improve sidewalks, add more traffic-calming measures, add shelters/benches for bus stops, improve the stormwater system, and more.
 - k. Joe asked if committee members had items to add to the agenda for the February meeting. Scott said that he would like to discuss ways to improve the bike route to schools.
 - l. Ryan moved to adjourn the meeting. Liz seconded the motion. Committee members unanimously voted to end the meeting.
 - m. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.