

TRAFFIC CONTROL BOARD MINUTES

January 27th, 2016

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT: Todd Cormier, Pierre Jomini, Jerry Dunning, Ron Alles, Capt. Harper

MEMBERS ABSENT: Gene Wade, Sondra Baker

STAFF: Terry Smith, Aaron Lebsack, Erin Claunch, Rhea Grandahl (Billings Police Department), Debi Meling

GUESTS: Mike Ferguson (*Billings Gazette*)

BUSINESS MEETING:

Call to order: Todd Cormier called the meeting to order at 12:10 pm in the conference room of the Public Works Building, 2224 Montana Avenue.

Minutes: Pierre asked for clarification on the location of several of the CTEP projects list in the December staff reports. Staff answered those questions. Todd Cormier noted these were listed as project titles, not a project description. Pierre noted the item concerning state vs. city crash statistics (page 3) was for a five year period 2010 thru 2014. Motion by Jerry Dunning for approval of the October minutes, as amended. Seconded by Pierre Jomini. Motion carried on a voice vote.

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT: None

STAFF REPORTS:

- **Location of Water/Sewer Rehab Projects:** Terry provided a handout showing the locations of the 2016 proposed water and sewer rehab projects.
- **BPD Crash Data:** Rhea Grandahl with the Billings Police Department gave a presentation to the board regarding crash data and how that information is compiled and used by the Police Department. Crashes that occur within City limits that involve minimal damage and no injuries or those that happen on private property are not investigated by Police. Drivers involved in non-investigated accidents are given a form in which they are asked to return to BPD or MHP. For those accidents that are investigated, officers will enter and verify information which in turn is entered into a BPD database. Rhea handed out samples of the types of reports that can be generated from the Police Department's new database & software:
 - Top accident Intersections (top 10, top 50, etc)
 - Summary by Incident Type (hit & run, property damage only, non-investigated, etc)
 - Accident Injury by accident type
 - Accident injury by Intersection
 - Accident summary by accident type
 - Accident tally by hour of day & day of week
 - Accident tally by location
 - Accident summary by officer

All information from investigated accidents is submitted to the State. Ron asked if accident reports were still sold to insurance companies. Rhea & Capt. Harper responded that insurance companies now get individual accident reports from a private company called Carfax, rather than directly from the Police Department.

Captain Harper reported that at current staffing levels the patrol division is almost completely reactive in responding to complaints & calls. They do not have time to be proactive in patrolling high accident locations. As of January 1st, Officers Ihde and Gilmore were returned to traffic duty on a temporary basis and hopefully as the newly hired officers now at the Law Enforcement Academy go out on the street, they (Gilmore and Ihde) will be able to concentrate more on traffic enforcement.

Ron noted that in 1980 the Police Department had 102 officers. There are currently only 144 officers. The city has almost doubled in population since then and has increased substantially in geographic area since 1980. Terry also noted that around 1980 the police department had a staff of 7 to 9 civilian accident investigators that handled almost all traffic accident investigations for the City, freeing up officer's time to do other types of work. When federal funding ran out the program was dropped.

BOARD REPORTS: Terry reported on behalf of Lora Mattox. There will be two public meeting being held in the Community Room at the library next week. A meeting on the West End Multi-Modal Transportation Study will take place Tues., February 2nd from 5pm – 7pm. A meeting on the Rims to Valley Bike/Ped Feasibility Study will be held on Wed., February 3rd from 4pm – 6pm. Both meetings will be an open house format so all are welcome to come and go anytime during the scheduled times.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Private Streets (Handling of maintenance, enforcement, complaints, etc):** Terry provided the board a handout with excerpts from the Billings City Subdivision Ordinance in response to an inquiry from the board. According to Section 23-406(a)(16), "Traffic control devices must conform to the standards contained in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices." From the structure of the ordinance, this applies to both public and private streets.
- **Flaggers at Construction Sites:** Terry reported that neither the *Montana Public Works Standard Specifications* nor the *City of Billings Standard Modifications* require flagger certification. The requirement may be added to individual projects via a special provision in the construction contract. Staff will review adding flagger certification as a requirement the next time the City Standard Modifications are updated.
- **Aronson Ave/Alkali Creek Rd Signing:** Erin gave an update to the board regarding proposed directional signing in the Aronson Ave and Alkali Creek Rd area. Because of the size of the signs involved, the city will have to contract out manufacture of the signs. The new signing should be installed by City crews sometime this spring.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Access from Rimrock Frontage Rd to Rimrock Rd:** Pierre reported that for the connections between Rimrock Road and the Rimrock frontage road, one connection has a stop sign and others don't. Pierre asked that staff review the inconsistency in how these are treated. Pierre asked that this be put on the agenda for the next meeting.
- **6th Ave N & N 31st St:** Following Pierre noted that based on news reports there were two pedestrian accidents within a few hours of each other at the intersection of 6th Avenue North and North 31st. Pierre asked if accident data for the past 3 to 5 years could be reviewed to see if there is a problem with pedestrian accidents at this location. Terry cautioned because of the formats that accident data is currently in this essentially a manual process. Data provided by the State can be easily queried for 2013 and earlier. State data for 2014 is in a different format. The database described earlier is essentially 2015 forward. Rhea confirmed that PD data cannot be queried to select only pedestrian involved accidents. Pierre asked staff to research pedestrian accidents at this intersection further.

- **Signal Timing Grand Ave & Zimmerman Trail:** Pierre stated he has noticed long delays for traffic on Grand even though there is no traffic north-south on Zimmerman. He most recently noticed this about 8 pm and wondered if the signals along Zimmerman/32nd could be taken out of coordination earlier in the evening.
- **Grand Avenue Signal Timing:** Ron noted that he has often heard complaints about the signal progression on Grand between 15th & 19th Streets. Terry reported that part of the issue is the mix of different brands & ages of controllers along Grand. Terry noted that Grand will be one of the next corridors for upgrading controllers. Staff will take a detailed look at signal timing along Grand when new controllers are installed. There is no specific schedule for this work at this time. Terry also cautioned the lack of dedicated left turn lanes at 17th and 19th on Grand significantly limits the ability to move Grand Avenue traffic at these two intersections.
- **Election of Board Chair & Vice Chair:** Pierre moved that Todd Cormier continue as board chair and Gene Wade continue as vice-chair. Motion was seconded and carried on voice vote.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Traffic Safety – How Billings crash data is used by Engineering
Billings Bypass Project
Airport & Main Intersection study (MDT w/ Kittleson & Associates)

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm.