

**TRAFFIC CONTROL BOARD  
MINUTES  
September 27, 2011**

MEMBERS PRESENT: *Todd Cormier, Walt Willett, Steve Zeier, Sondra Baker, Capt. Bedford*

MEMBERS ABSENT: *Brent Krueger*

STAFF SUPPORT: *Terry Smith, Erin Claunch, Lora Mattox*

GUESTS: None

BUSINESS MEETING

Call to order: Steve Zeier called the meeting to order at 12:07 pm in the conference room of the Public Works Building, 2224 Montana Avenue.

Minutes: Walt Willett moved for approval of the August minutes as distributed. Todd Cormier seconded the motion and it carried on voice vote.

Open Public Comment: None

STAFF REPORTS:

**Construction Projects:**

Erin reported that concrete work for the new traffic signal project at Central and 29<sup>th</sup> St West will start soon. Poles and controller equipment are on order and can be installed during colder weather.

The right turn lane project on 32<sup>nd</sup> West at Broadwater Avenue will be delayed until next spring because delivery time for the new signal pole could make it impossible to complete paving work this fall.

A contract has been awarded for the striping & signing project to implement a two-way-left-turn lane on 32<sup>nd</sup> West from Central Avenue to King Avenue West. This may be a spring 2012 construction project depending on weather this fall.

The Bench Connection Project is on schedule and should be open to traffic late this fall. Construction of a slip ramp for traffic turning off Main just north of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue is underway.

BOARD REPORTS:

**Planning Board.** Lora reported that some updates to the subdivision and zoning codes are in process to bring them into compliance with changes in State law. The Planning Department will be acquiring a copy of the TransCad software that will enable them to run the transportation plan model locally rather than relying on MDT in Helena. This will allow the plan to adapt to changes in land use more readily, and to allow “what-if” scenarios to be run locally to look at the traffic impacts of large developments, annexations, and other large scale land use changes.

OLD BUSINESS:

**Board Vacancy created by Knox resignation.** Terry reported that the opening will not be advertised until later when terms on other Boards are due to end and the Council is seeking applications for all Board openings to be filled by late December appointments. After discussion the Board decided to delay election of a new vice-chair until it was known what would happen to Steve Zeier’s position, since the Board might be looking for a new chairperson as well.

NEW BUSINESS:

**Steve Zeier's Position.** Steve will become a City employee on Thursday, Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>. He will be the Tax Increment District Coordinator for the EBURD and SBURD districts. Terry reported he has submitted the question of whether City employees can serve on City Boards to the City Attorney and is waiting for a response.

**Before & After Speed Study results.** Erin went through a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the results of before and after speed studies at various locations in Billings where speed limit or other traffic control changes have been made. The locations included:

- Central between 29<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> Streets West
  - Reduction in posted speed limit from 45 MPH to 35 MPH
  - Approx. 1 MPH reduction in Average speed (41.4 MPH to 40.4 MPH)
  - Approx. 1 MPH reduction in 85%-ile speed (45 MPH to 43.5 MPH)
- 36<sup>th</sup> Street West between King and Monad
  - Increase in posted speed limit from 25 MPH to 35 MPH
  - 0.1 MPH decrease in 85%-ile speed northbound and 1 MPH increase in 85%-ile speed southbound
  - Approx 0.5 MPH drop in average speed NB and negligible (0.05 mph) drop in average speed SB
- Bike Lanes—various locations
  - Small changes (less than 1 MPH typical) in average and 85%-ile speeds before and after bike lanes
  - Some increases and some decreases
  - Does not seem to correlate to the presence or actual use of on-street parking
- Stop sign installations along 19<sup>th</sup> St. West north of Grand, and on Parkhill Drive west of 17<sup>th</sup>
  - Small changes (less than 1 MPH) in average, median & 85%-ile speeds
  - Both increases & decreases
  - Because drivers were treating both 19<sup>th</sup> and Parkhill as thru streets in past, no significant changes in speed were anticipated in this case. Normally creation of a “thru street” would be expected to raise travel speeds slightly.

**State Law Change—Drivers Approaching “T” Intersections.** Terry reported that as a result of House Bill 259, State Law will change effective October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, regarding which driver has the right-of-way at an uncontrolled “T” intersection. After Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, the “yield to the right” rule will no longer apply at uncontrolled “T” intersections. Instead the driver approaching on the stem of the “T” will be required to yield to drivers from either direction on the roadway across the top of the “T.”

**Christmas Wreath Lane—Avenue D between 17<sup>th</sup> Street West and Rose Park.** Capt. Bedford reported he had been contacted by the neighborhood requesting special or additional traffic controls at 19<sup>th</sup> Street West and Avenue D during the holiday season. They feel the changes in stop control along 19<sup>th</sup> Street West will result in confusion and possible hazards because of extra traffic in the area for their Christmas display. Capt. Bedford and Erin have discussed the request. Possible solutions include a temporary 4-way stop at the intersection and barricading the street to force traffic on 19<sup>th</sup> to take alternate routes thru the neighborhood. Because of the time it takes drivers to become used to a 4-way stop this was felt to be impractical. It would also result in two adjustment periods, one when implemented and another when the 4-way stop was removed. Detouring 19<sup>th</sup> Street traffic onto other streets in the neighborhood has the side effect of increasing traffic on those streets creating a potentially undesirable impact on those streets. The consensus among staff and Board members was that special treatment during the holiday season was not justified, primarily because traffic on Avenue D is driving very slowly while they observe the displays. It should not be a hindrance for drivers if they do have to stop and wait for cross-traffic on 19<sup>th</sup> Street West.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:11 PM.