

TRAFFIC CONTROL BOARD MINUTES

March 26, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: Todd Cormier, Walt Willett, Sgt. Gartner (representing Capt. Harper), Gene Wade, Trina White, Brent Krueger, Sondra Baker

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF SUPPORT: Terry Smith, Erin Claunch, Zach Heid, Lora Mattox, Debi Meling

GUESTS: None

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: Motion for approval of the February minutes by Gene Wade, seconded by Trina White. Motion carried on a voice vote.

Open Public Comment: None

STAFF REPORTS: None

BOARD REPORTS:

Planning Board: Lora Mattox informed the Board the City Council is expected to approve the consultant contract for the Transportation Plan Update on April 8th. The selection committee recommended Kittelson and Associates out of Boise. DOWL-HKM of Billings will be a sub-consultant working with Kittelson. The Hospitality Corridor Study is moving forward and MDT has been working with the consultant, Fehr & Peers, on what would be feasible in their right-of-way.

OLD BUSINESS:

2nd Ave N & N 22nd St.: Erin Claunch gave a presentation on new data collected for the two-way traffic transition at 2nd Ave N & N 22nd St. Second Avenue changes from one-way eastbound to two-way traffic at N. 22nd. The change to two-way traffic east of N. 22nd was implemented in October 2011. Westbound traffic approaching N 22nd St must either turn left or right. The report updates data previously collected and presented to the Board in March 2012. It was hoped that the number of wrong way movements would decrease as drivers became more familiar with the changed traffic pattern.

While the total number of wrong way vehicles increased, in most cases the percentages remained very similar because the total number of vehicles traveling through the intersection increased in 2013. The table below summarizes the 2012 and 2013 data.

	EB Wrong-Way				WB Wrong-Way			
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
Saturday	43	67	3.4%	5.1%	16	27	8.2%	16.4%
Sunday	26	26	3.6%	3.6%	14	9	12.8%	8.4%
Monday	85	94	4.3%	4.5%	25	20	9.2%	6.2%

Erin showed the board a permanent solution to cure the wrong way driving which consisted of a bulbout on the west side of 22nd. The bulbout would force eastbound traffic to merge into a single lane before the

intersection and would not allow westbound traffic to enter the one way. Another option recently approved in the MUTCD is to use flashing LED's in the border of signs to draw driver attention to the signs. In this case the existing "DO NOT ENTER" and the "END ONE WAY" signs would be replaced with signs having flashing LED's. Estimated cost for the bulbout option is \$50,000. Estimated cost for the LED sign option is \$7500.

Walt Willett asked if the bulbout were to go in; would there still be an eastbound left turn lane? Erin said no there would not be. All eastbound traffic would be forced into the right lane. This could cause some traffic backup if an eastbound left turner had to wait for a gap in westbound traffic before completing the turn. Gene Wade asked if consideration was given to hanging the signs overhead where they would be more visible to drivers. Todd Cormier noted that if the city saved any of the old poles & mastarms that were removed with the recent downtown signal upgrades, those poles might work for hanging signs overhead.

Erin noted this intersection is unique in Billings. All other intersections with transitions from one-way to two-way traffic are either stop controlled or have a traffic signal. Reversing the direction of stop signs at the intersection (requiring 2nd Avenue traffic to stop) or implementing a 4-way stop was considered. This was rejected because traffic volumes are much heavier eastbound on 2nd than on the other three approaches.

NEW BUSINESS:

On-street HC Parking Guidelines: Terry reviewed the current process for granting on-street handicapped parking spaces. Most requests are from older parts of town in areas with a high demand for on-street parking, such as a lot of apartments or an area near a high school, the hospitals or MSU-B. In most cases an individual is not looking for curb ramps, but merely wants to be able to park reasonably close to their home because they can't walk a long distance. Implementation is determined on a case by case basis. On-street HC spaces are not assigned to a specific person or address, but vehicles parked in the space must have a HC license plate or placard. In residential areas the City does not charge an application fee or a fee for sign installation. Traditionally enforcement was on a complaint basis, but with the Police volunteers doing parking enforcement, some tickets are now issued without a complaint. Currently we request sign-offs from neighbors and consent of the landlord if a tenant is requesting the space.

Recently there have been multiple requests in the same block or for the same building, challenges to why a zone was installed, requests for bus/paratransit use, and a request for a space to be used by a caregiver rather than the resident. Staff is reviewing if more formal criteria are needed. Staff conducted an Internet search of the policies in other cities. Terry presented a list of other criteria that are commonly considered, including: availability of off-street parking, is the building served ADA accessible, proof of vehicle ownership, on-street parking demand, proximity to building served and to other HC zones, and if the building being served is a single family, duplex, or multi-family dwelling.

Terry asked the board if they had any ideas or comments on potential criteria. Trina asked about a HC zone in front of a house near MSUB because it seems like it is never used. Sgt. Gartner asked how we are notified of a zone that is no longer needed. Terry said that we usually get a phone call from a neighbor that informs us that it has not been used for some time and that they would like it to be removed. Todd asked about residential permit parking. Terry said the City now has an ordinance that allows implementation of a permit parking zone but one has never been implemented. Todd asked if we paint the curbs blue for the HC zone. Terry said the spaces are identified by signing only, but he doesn't remember having any compliance issues. Gene mentioned putting primary residence on the form. Trina questioned if 500 feet between HC zones was too far apart? How far is too far? Brent asked how many zones are being requested. Terry said about 1 or 2 a month. Gene mentioned that he likes that the existing form requires neighbors to sign off. Gene asked if the application should have a place to write down the permit number from the applicant's license plate or placard. Gene said he felt the need for staff judgment will never be eliminated.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 1:07 pm.