

**PLACE Design Task Force Minutes  
November 14, 2019 - 12:45 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Neighborhood Development Services  
Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor City Hall**

**Members Present:** Andrew Mondeschein, Rachel Lloyd, Lena Seville, Navarre Bartz, Mike Stoneking, Rory Stolzenberg, Susan Perkins

**Staff Present:** Patrick Cory, Carrie Rainey, Kyle Kling

**Visitors Present:** Brian Copeland, Project Manager with Timmons Group

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Stoneking called the PLACE Design Task Force Meeting to order at 12:50 p.m.

**1. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC (5 minutes)**

None

**2. BARRACKS ROAD/EMMET STREET UPDATE (60 minutes)**

**Mr. Mondeschein** – Myself and others have been attending the steering committee. There has been one public meeting and another in a couple of weeks. As Place Task Force, I would really like for us to have a collective opinion that we can vote on. These are the things that we would like to submit to the Planning Commission. This is our last opportunity to have a collective opinion. I shared the Power Point with PLACE and got some feedback. Through that feedback and conversations that I have had with people, we wrote a draft memo. I did this out of expediency. It's very hard to get PLACE to have an opinion on something. It's a page and a half of things that I think we might support or things that we have questions about. We can go through line by line and I can edit it as we go. We can vote on a final version. This is something that we can talk about. We do a brief review of the different options.

**Brian Copeland, Project Manager** – There are two primary components of the project. The first is what to do with the intersection. The second is how to best accommodate bicycles and pedestrians along Barracks Road. We did have a public workshop about 3 or 4 weeks ago. At the meeting, we showed the three different options for the intersection. There are things that are pretty similar with the three options. Every option includes a new northbound right turn lane on Emmet Street going to a controlled slip lane, improved crosswalks that are perpendicular, widening the refuge islands, all of the approach legs to provide acceptable refuge for pedestrians crossing each leg of the intersection, and extension of a raised median through Meadowbrook Road. The biggest difference with option one is that we are maintaining the existing ten foot lanes. We are hugging the south side as much as we can to stay off this property. This is the least impact design. The third option is the opposite of the first option. All of the same improvements in the intersection exist, but we are carrying that all of the way to Hessian Road, just to provide some additional queuing capacity in the intersection. Option two is the hybrid of the two. This is the compromise

between options one and three. We carried out the project survey. We got 90 people to respond to the project survey online. The overwhelming majority preferred option one because the lack of retaining walls, least impact of the tree canopy in the intersection, and the cost. Once you start down the road of opening that slope and adding retaining walls that quickly become ten to fifteen feet high, the price per square foot of asphalt is really high. The other contributing factors is you are still receiving, by adding the fourth lane, a dual left turn lane. If we have dedicated lefts, these dual lefts can run concurrent to these two lefts helps the overall operations of the intersection. With the improvements that we have here, we are already obtaining a pretty substantial benefit to the level of service in the intersection. The third option does provide some benefit but difficult to cost justify relative to what you lose in aesthetics and cost.

**Ms. Lloyd** – Can you quantify the change in improvement for us to understand?

**Brian Copeland** – The B over C ratio is .88 for option three. For option one, it is .86. The biggest benefit that you see is when you look at existing traffic volumes under existing conditions, and queue length resulting from that, as compared to option one. One change to this would be that we show a through right. What we heard from the survey, was people preferred a dedicated right. We did study that. There is a 42% reduction with option one compared to existing conditions. There is a 40% reduction in the queue length. If you look at the ‘do nothing’ option compared to option one, there is a 42% reduction with queue length and with option three, it’s 55%. There is some benefit, but not the huge benefit.

**Mr. Mondeschein** – I hope to reserve 45 minutes for pure discussion.

**Ms. Seville** – Can you tell me the differences between the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in those options in the intersection?

**Brian Copeland** – They are largely the same, aside from the sidewalk on the north side. Because that slope is so sloped, so close to the road, this option would not include the extension of a sidewalk from Meadowbrook, where the CAVA is, to Hessian Road. There are still options to get to the shared use path that’s over here, which will then extend down Barracks Road. The ability to move along Barracks Road, depending on where you’re located, there are crossings. That’s the biggest difference between the intersection options, the lack of a sidewalk.

**Ms. Seville** – Isn’t there a transit stop in that area, so there will be access to the transit stop to cross the street back over?

**Brian Copeland** – The existing crosswalk at Hessian Road across to where the bus stop is on the south side of Barracks Road, that bus stop will be improved. The crosswalk at Hessian will remain to an improved shared use path on the south side.

**Ms. Lloyd** – If cyclists are coming down Emmet Street, this is a shared use path above the curb. They will just come around that corner still above the curb?

**Brian Copeland** – This entrance would remain as it is today. This goes up to a shared use path that was constructed with CVS. All of this is already there. This is maintaining what is there.

**Ms. Lloyd** – Is the intent to get all cyclists out of Emmet Street?

**Kyle Kling, City Project Manager** – Currently Amanda Poncy is working the feasibility study for the corridor that will connect the gaps between the Emmet Street streetscape and this project. She is working on the feasibility study with a consultant that can be done in that area. Everything that is out there now from the CVS site, pedestrian wise, is likely going to stay in place. We will continue those improvements.

**Mr. Bartz** – Our only concern is that people are worried about getting clipped on Barracks Road heading to the southeast.

**Brian Copeland** – You come off of the street or you stay in the lane with cars and travel through here.

**Mr. Stoneking** – The bike is in a car lane and merges onto the shared path. When the intersection is confusing, they get off their bike and use the crosswalk. They switch back and forth between being a pedestrian and cyclist. Intersections are convoluted.

**Mr. Stolzenberg** – Will the lights be leading for pedestrians to give them a couple extra seconds? Will there be a sign that ‘bikes use pedestrian signals?’

**Brian Copeland** – Yes, all new signals and all new signalized intersection.

**Mr. Stolzenberg** – There is a crosswalk over by Hessian to the east, but there is none where the sidewalk ends on Meadowbrook?

**Brian Copeland** – There is space here on the shared use path. I don’t know what opportunities there may be in the corner of the CAVA site to have people here. There are some walls that run along here. Generally, I think that it is fairly flat behind the shared use path. It may be something where they can move it to the other side of the intersection.

**Mr. Mondeschein** – I don’t have a problem with it. Would there be push back with saying that we can’t block the right turn lane so close to the intersection? I think that it’s great.

**Brian Copeland** – We presented four options at the public workshop for improving bike/pedestrian accommodations. Obviously, there is a curb, a little 4 foot attached sidewalk, and there is a slope that is pretty steep off the sidewalk that has overgrown vegetation. It’s just not a safe environment for bikes and pedestrians. We proposed four options where we felt like we captured some of the interests of all of the groups that we could think of, including the property owners. This option is to have a traditional climbing lane with a buffer strip and a five foot sidewalk. Option two, is to try not to move the retaining wall away, but switch out the planted buffer in option one with a protection zone. Option three was to provide a traditional buffer strip, ten foot shared use path for the retaining wall. Option four is basically is the same thing, but pushing everything to the curb, having a lot of obstructions in this area. It does create the opportunity for much shorter retaining walls. One thing to note on this, is that the eastbound lane on Barracks varies from 12 feet to 15 feet wide. A part of every option would be to narrow those lanes to 11 feet. Every option would accommodate that. We are at 10 feet at the intersection. We are doing that because it is already 10 feet. That’s a good basis for the ability to use 10 feet because it’s already a 10 foot lane. It’s much wider up Barracks Road. In the project survey, the shared use path options clearly outweigh the dedicated in-road bike. Options 3 and 4 were preferred.

There was an open discussion by the members of the PLACE meeting discussing the different options presented by Brian Copeland, Project Manager with The Timmons Group. After the open discussion, Mr. Copeland continued with his presentation.

**Brian Copeland** – Once we learned that the shared use path was the preferred approach, we discussed with the Steering Committee. What does that actually mean in terms of wall heights? We ran a center line down the center of the road in a cross section design. Option 3, the average height was 5 feet, the minimum was 2 feet, and the maximum was 9 feet. Option 4, the average height was 3 feet, the minimum was 1.5 feet, and the maximum was 6 feet. Those are the quantifiable differences between the wall differences. What are some things that we can do to get closer to a design that mirrors what option 4 shows for the wall, but doesn't eliminate the buffer? It really is at the bookends of the project. The steering committee had a clear preference for option 4. The steering committee is made up of property owners directly impacted by the project.

**Mr. Mondeschein** – A lot of people on the steering committee live on the right of way. If they are going to see anything, they are going to want the narrowest thing possible.

**Brian Copeland** – One of the things that they asked us to do was to look at the opportunities to move the road either a little bit or a lot in some varying degree to the north, to not move the shared use path to the north. The degree of impact would be substantial on the north side versus the south side. When we looked at where the center line is today, the westbound lane does vary in width, and there are some areas where there is some extra paved shoulder off the white edge line. Where are some places where we might be able to tighten the curve a little bit? We re-struck a new center line to move it anywhere from 6 inches to 3.5 feet from where the existing center line is. That is all based on what's available on the north side of the road. We also looked at how narrow can we get this buffer. We looked at a 3 foot buffer. Can we achieve all of the goals of what a buffer is there to provide? Those two primary changes plus option 4 gave us these results. The 7 feet occurs in a 100 foot section that is on the northern end of the project near Buckingham Road. There is a really tall slope at Buckingham Road. This particular wall between Buckingham and the first driveway has an average of 5, minimum of 3, and maximum of 7. About 1000 feet is being analyzed from Buckingham to where the bus stop is. We didn't look at anything from the bus stop and south. It's part of the analysis. That 100 foot section represents about 10 percent of the project. If you remove that section of it, the maximum goes down to 5 feet. With this option, we are directly tying to the existing ground here. The other big issue was the number of trees that were going to be removed. The tree canopy is a major contributor and that it needs to be protected.

**Mr. Stoneking** – Why are all of these guardrails?

**Brian Copeland** – In some of these location, the walls get so low that we will not need some of these things. From a city liability perspective, we want to have these walls there.

**Mr. Stoneking** – I am advocating for less concrete, no guardrails if not needed. They just add up to that undesirable environment, where it's all about VDOT standards. We next have razor wire. It doesn't make for what we are trying to achieve.

**Ms. Lloyd** – Can we talk briefly about the construction of that wall? I have heard from neighbors. I understand the rationale for using that because it has a minimal construction impact on the land and slopes behind it. It's what we usually use on highways. I am not that keen on that as a design choice. I do understand that there cost implications.

**Brian Copeland** – There are probably some panel options that mask the pile itself. I can look into what options there are to mask the piling effect. There is a way to cap it, make the top look nice. The panels come in all styles of aesthetic treatments and architectural treatments. What can we do with the piles?

**Ms. Lloyd** – I have a little bit of an issue with the kind of stamped pattern info panels.

**Brian Copeland** – The other thing to mention is that some of these locations on the wall are really short. Some of these would be two feet. If we did some kind of brick pattern, that use it as much as we can.

When we did our research on the adjacent properties, some of the deeds from the 1950s showed a reserved area for future roadway widening. We are contesting that this is dedicated right of way for the city to make improvements. That's what our contention has been. Property owners have hired attorneys to contest that position. If their position wins the day, we would have to acquire right of way. The need to acquire right of way doesn't change for everything. The need to acquire right of way doesn't change between option 3 and option 4. If the city's position wins, we would need hardly any easement. The budget for the project captured the need to acquire whatever right of way is needed. The answer doesn't really effect the project.

**Mr. Mondeschein** – Is the only way to have a shared PLACE opinion is to vote on it today?

**Ms. Lloyd** – I don't think that we need to have a vote on one thing. We are moving towards a consensus. We have some questions or some things that we feel the consultant team help to resolve.

**Mr. Stoneking** – We want to have shorter retaining walls.

**Ms. Seville** – We do need to think about kids. If we don't add the buffer, the kids are going to completely surrounded by concrete.

**Mr. Stolzenberg** – Concrete might be bad to walk next to, but it's not going to kill me like what is on the other side. That's why the buffer is important.

**Ms. Lloyd** – Another consideration is lighting.

**Brian Copeland** – There was an idea of where we could put the lighting on the wall. The challenge is that the wall height is so varying from 2 feet up to 7 feet to get any kind of consistent look or design for lighting to accomplish the goal becomes a challenge. The design and constructability became a challenge.

The biggest thing that we heard from the steering committee was the dense tree canopy. Not doing anything or doing as little to impact the tree canopy that is there.

After Mr. Copeland's there was another open discussion regarding a vote on the consensus of the PLACE Task Force to present to the relative committees. The PLACE Task Force voted to present the relevant committees:

- In support of option 1 at the intersection – improvement of the bus stop and access to the bus stop
- Bike and pedestrian – Three foot buffer and taking advantage of the right of way as it exists
- Emphasis on materiality and the shortest retaining walls possible
- Explore whether guardrails are required by code – Minimize the guardrails

**3. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC (5 minutes)**

None

**Meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM**