

DES MOINES TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

November 20, 2007

MINUTES

The Des Moines Traffic Safety Committee met at 6:30 p.m. on November 20, 2007, in the Meeting Room of the Northwest Community Center at 5110 Franklin Avenue. Those members in attendance were:

Mark Barkley
Sgt. Jack Beardsley
Mary Conlow
Gary Fox
Carl McPherson

John Morrissey
George Robinson
Bob Saf
Kevin Williamson
Jim Windsor

Members Absent: Mary McBride

Staff Present: Dennis Rich, Mike Ring, and Michelle Schomer

CHAIRPERSON MARK BARKLEY CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:30 P.M.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Minutes of October 9, 2007 Meeting

MOTION was made by Jim Windsor to approve the minutes as mailed; seconded by Bob Saf. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Other Old Business

There was no Other Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 41st / 42nd Streets Traffic Calming

Gary Fox presented this item as follows:

On May 8, 2007, the Traffic Safety Committee approved a staff recommendation to implement several traffic calming measures intended to minimize "thru" traffic on 41st Street from Forest Avenue to University Avenue. These modifications included prohibiting left turn and through movements for southbound traffic on 41st Street at University Avenue; prohibiting left turns for eastbound traffic on University Avenue at 41st Street; and allowing parking all day (except Fridays for garbage pickup) on the west side of 41st Street between University and Forest.

The turn restriction signs were installed August 28, 2007, along with traffic pylons on University Avenue blocking the left-turn lane. After these measures were installed, the City received a considerable amount of concern from motorists, and particularly from residents of adjacent streets, about the inconvenience of these changes and diversion of traffic to other streets. A public meeting was held October 16 at the Northwest Community Center, following a letter of invitation sent to approximately 200 residences and businesses in the area. Gary Fox presented some background information about the traffic control changes

that had been made, including a brief review of the functional classification of streets citywide and in this area, and reviewed the traffic data about the impacts of the changes that were implemented.

Traffic speed and volume data was collected the week of September 24 following the restrictions, and compared with data taken before the restrictions. On 41st Street, the traffic volume after the restrictions was 2,850 vehicles per day (vpd), which was a reduction of about 500 (15%) compared to the before volume of 3,350 in October 2005. On 42nd Street, the traffic volume after restrictions was 7,030 vpd, which was an increase of about 800 (13%) compared to the before volume of 6,225 in August 2007. On Forest Avenue between 41st and 42nd Streets, the after volume was 7,600 vpd, which was an increase of about 450 (6%) compared to the before volume of 7,140 in August 2007. On 40th Street, the after volume was about 800 vpd, but there was not a before count for comparison.

In addition to traffic volumes, data was collected for traffic speeds on 40th, 41st and 42nd Streets. Before data is available only for 41st Street, from October, 2005, while after data was collected in September, 2007. Both the average speeds and 85th %-ile speeds (speed which 85% of the vehicles are traveling at or below) are shown below:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Direction</u>	<u>Avg.</u>	<u>85%-ile</u>
41 st St, S of Forest	10/2005	NB	29	34
“ “	“	SB	30	35
41 st St, S of Forest	9/2007	NB	27	31
“ “	“	SB	32	38
40 th St, S of Forest	9/2007	NB	25	30
“ “	“	SB	24	30
42 nd St, S of Forest	9/2007	NB	27	31
“ “	“	SB	31	36

As shown in the above data, speeds on 40th Street are generally typical for a 25 mph residential street, with average speeds of about 25 and 85th %-ile speeds of 30 and little difference by direction. On 41st Street, northbound speeds are also fairly typical, and appear to have reduced somewhat from the speeds in 2005. Southbound speeds, however, appear to have increased somewhat, and are now substantially higher than the posted 25 mph speed limit. On 42nd Street, speeds are generally typical for a 30 mph collector street, although the southbound speeds are substantially higher than northbound speeds.

The October 16 meeting was well attended, and the City received a lot of input about these changes. Attached to these minutes for clarification is a copy of traffic flow alternatives from City staff that were presented briefly at the meeting (items 1-13), as well as two additional items that were presented by a citizen at the meeting. Items with the box marked with an X (3, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 13) are included, and described below, in the staff recommendation for short-term actions. The other items on this list, as well as additional items that may be added, could be considered for future, longer term actions.

There has been considerable input, both at and following the October 16 meeting, that the City did not get input from residents or businesses from surrounding streets prior to implementing the traffic calming changes. The City has acknowledged that, and has

provided notification and opportunity for public input at both the October 16 meeting as well as this Traffic Safety Committee meeting. Also, a group of residents has submitted a statement (copy attached and made a part of these minutes) to the Mayor, City Council, City Manager, Traffic Safety Committee and others. This statement requests that all previous traffic calming measures on 41st Street be removed, and that a process be established to review traffic concerns of the entire neighborhood.

Staff has reviewed all of the information submitted before, during and after the public meeting, along with the traffic data collected both before and after the traffic changes were made. Based on this information, traffic data, numerous field observations and the specific conditions and characteristics of this area, staff has developed a recommendation for modifications to the traffic calming measures that were previously implemented. This recommendation is intended give priority to the safety implications of various options, enhance pedestrian safety and crossing opportunities, and provide some balance (or compromise) for traffic flow on the streets in this neighborhood.

Staff believes that the recommendation is responsive to the neighborhood statement that has been submitted, as careful consideration was given to potential removal of any or all of the measures that have already been implemented, and the recommended measures are based on overall traffic flow and safety benefits, and not on previous action. In addition, a process for consideration and approval has been established, with the consideration and recommendation of measures by the Traffic Safety Committee and final approval or disapproval by the City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. Remove the left-turn restriction and pylons from University Avenue at 41st Street, and allow eastbound left turns. A left turn lane on a major roadway such as University provides significant safety benefits, and the current turn restriction negates most of those benefits. This change will allow some additional traffic to travel northbound on 41st Street, but will provide some reduction in traffic on 40th Street and 42nd Street, and will allow the 6-8 buses per day to circulate back on 41st Street rather than 40th Street. 40th Street has substantially more parking, and it is on the east side of the street where it makes northbound bus travel very difficult. 41st Street has very little parking, with none on the east side, so it is relatively easy for the buses to travel north on 41st Street. In addition, this change improves the traffic flow somewhat at the intersection of 41st Street and Forest Avenue. This intersection is a 4-way stop intersection, which does not handle left turns very well under heavy traffic times. Having some additional traffic traveling straight north through this intersection on 41st Street will provide smoother operation than going north on 42nd Street, east on Forest, and then making a left turn to continue north on 41st Street. This change should also help reduce cut-through traffic at the parking lot on the northwest corner of the intersection.
2. Keep the left-turn restriction on 41st Street at University Avenue, but allow traffic to cross University straight to access the shopping area. This straight movement is not a heavy volume, and allowing it will provide better and more reasonable access from the immediate neighborhood to the shopping area. Continuing the left-turn restriction will improve overall safety by directing southbound traffic wanting to turn east on University to use the left-turn lane and traffic signal at the intersection of 42nd and University. The left-turn restriction will also provide some reduction in traffic volume on 41st Street compared to no restrictions, which is desirable for this residentially classified street.

3. Install stop signs on Forest Avenue to create a 3-way stop intersection, and paint a stop bar on 42nd Street to indicate vehicles should stop at a point not blocking pedestrians crossing east-west at this intersection. The all-way stop control will enhance the safety of this intersection for both motorists and pedestrians, and will reduce congestion and delays for northbound traffic on 42nd Street. With the current stop arrangement, 42nd Street northbound traffic must stop at Forest, and yield to any traffic on Forest. Vehicles turning right focus their attention to see if vehicles are approaching from the left on Forest, and are not attentive to pedestrians coming from the east. Vehicles turning left from 42nd must yield to both eastbound and westbound traffic on Forest, which causes significant delay for 42nd Street traffic. These delays will be reduced because while northbound vehicles will still have to stop, they will be able to alternate with rather than wait for vehicles on Forest.
4. Install left-turn signal indication for southbound traffic on 42nd Street at University Avenue. This will further enhance the safety for southbound traffic turning east onto University and will reduce delays and congestion for this movement. The signal timings at this intersection have already been changed to provide additional green time for 42nd Street to reduce congestion and delays.
5. Install pedestrian signals with countdown timers at the intersection of 42nd Street and University, to enhance pedestrian safety and crossing ability at this intersection.
6. Install 30 MPH speed limit sign for southbound 42nd Street and paint white edge lines and double-yellow centerline to create 10-foot travel lanes, to help reduce speeds.
7. Schedule periodic radar enforcement and speed trailer deployment on both 42nd Street and 41st Street to help control vehicle speeds.
8. Install enhanced truck route signing on 42nd Street south of University and on University Avenue to clearly indicate that 42nd Street north of University is not a truck route.

The above recommendations are intended to represent short-term actions that can be implemented quickly. It is further recommended that staff continue to work with representatives of the residents and businesses in this area, if desired, to consider additional, or perhaps different, long-term actions. Any such additional or different actions would require a consensus of the representatives and staff that it is a viable alternative, along with notification to the current or expanded notification list, before being considered by the Traffic Safety Committee.

Chairperson Mark Barkley invited public comments or questions related to this item.

Nancy Knowles of 1223 42nd Street: Ms. Knowles asked for more pedestrian crossing time at the intersection of 42nd and University.

Gary Fox explained that pedestrians can complete their crossing with the flashing DON'T WALK indication. The flashing DON'T WALK offers pedestrian clearance time. The pedestrian countdown does a nice job of letting people know how long they have left to cross the street. Staff will look at the WALK time issue once the the pedestrian countdown has been installed.

Josh Feathers of 1338 41st Street: 41st Street speeds seem to be higher. He asked that there be more voluntary compliance and also requested speed trailers. Would like to see another round of traffic counts. He asked that the traffic pylons be removed from University. Asked what the intent of the pylons were and what was the City's goal in placing them?

Gary Fox: Pylons were put in place to emphasize the turn restrictions and to clearly indicate the turning restrictions.

Vince Rubino of 1307 42nd Street. (Representative of a group of residents and businesses.) Referred to his written statement/petition (a copy of which is attached to and made a part of these minutes). The group's initial reaction to the new traffic controls was based on the additional traffic they notice on their streets. The main concern of the group was the arbitrary nature in which the traffic controls were put in place. At no point was contact made with the surrounding area. He believes a wider range of opinion would have changed the outcome of the May 8 decision of the Traffic Safety Committee. He believes the 1st recommendation is warranted, but asks that the left-turn restrictions on 41st Street in Item 2 also be removed, and would also ask that the all-way STOP at 42nd and Forest be put on hold. Other recommendations from the group were to lower the speed limits on both Forest and 42nd to 25 mph. They also believe the current classification of 42nd Street be changed from collector to residential. The entire neighborhood wants to be part of the process for traffic calming in the area and believes it best to remove all that has been put in and start over.

Victoria Daniels of 1240 40th Street: Thanked the Committee for being responsive. Wants ongoing dialogue with the City and wishes to periodically revisit traffic control measures. Sees a resurgence of young families on 40th Street.

Mary LaHay of 1321 41st Street: This was not an arbitrary process. The Core group has been working on this issue for three years . . . looking for traffic control measures. A few neighborhood concerns should not discount their needs. Utilized qualitative and quantitative data. Any consideration for changes should use the same process and data. Numbers do matter. We were experiencing 500 cars per day doing 40 mph.

Bill LaHay of 1321 41st Street: Group went by the book over a period of 3 years, working with and through City Departments, Traffic Safety Committee Members, City Council Members and bringing the issues to the City Council meetings. This issue was about safety. No accidents have occurred as a result of the new traffic controls. The momentum to remove them is about being outnumbered. Believes placing all-way STOPS at 42nd and Forest would cause more congestion, in turn causing more cut-through traffic. Believes speed trailers only provide a temporary effect. Would like the City to use a model of the Beaver and Forest intersection.

Gary Propstein of 1225 41st Street: Stated 42nd Street is a collector street and is expected to carry more traffic. Why go backwards? Believes requests to remove the traffic controls are knee-jerk reactions and not related to safety.

Dwayne Fiihr of 4110 Forest Avenue: Supports rescinding all measures put in place and also requests that a STOP bar be painted, along with pavement markings for crosswalks at 42nd and Forest. A "YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS" sign should be also placed. Would like to see more radar enforcement and enforcement of the truck route ordinance in his neighborhood.

Jeff Link of 4129 Forest Avenue: In agreement with Vince Rubino's statement. Does not have a good sense that the all-way STOP is best at 42nd and Forest, but would like to see the addition of crosswalk/pedestrian signage and pavement markings.

Barby Harding of 1251 42nd Street: In agreement with Vince Rubino's statement. Asked what the traffic count is to be considered a "residential" street.

Jim Heemstra of 1244 41st Street: Spoke of the new development north of Des Moines that contributes to the traffic issues Des Moines has to deal with. Thinks the city should address the "Dahls/Snookies" intersection.

Andrew Lietzow: Thinks the all-way STOP at 42nd and Forest will back up traffic. He instead suggested a YIELD sign for northbound.

Karl Kaufman of 1222 41st Street: Feels the area neighborhoods all share the same issues . . . compliance problems, cut-through traffic, speeding, and illegal turns. Would like to see the energy in the room directed toward a solution.

Ed Conlow: Waveland Park Neighborhood Association Board had a discussion on 11/6/07 regarding tonight's issues. The Board expressed concern regarding the process used to place the traffic controls. The Board approved a motion to remove all traffic calming in place. The Association does not want to minimize the 41st Street concerns, but just wants to involve everyone affected.

Tim Urban (Owns Uptown Shopping Center): Spoke of cut-through traffic through parking lots in order to avoid the intersection. Wondered how enforceable the restrictions are. Asked that more notice be given to southbound traffic at 41st and Forest that 41st and University is a right-turn only intersection. He asked how many cars cue up in left-turn movements at rush hour. Also had concerns regarding speed.

Libby Crimmings of 4107 Forest Avenue: Believes everyone should be involved in the decision-making process.

Tom Vlassis: Apologized to the neighborhood for not getting wider involvement initially. Accepted a lot of the blame for this issue. He did not think the traffic would be pushed elsewhere. He will revisit issue at the "Dahls/Snookies" intersection. He guessed that four years ago the intersection would have cost \$3.5 million to improve.

Gary Fox: Explained that volume thresholds do not denote a different street classification. Arterial streets are normally four lanes with higher speeds. Collector streets are 2-3 lanes and can also carry heavy traffic. All the rest of the streets would be considered residential.

Chairperson Barkley determined there was no further public comment and requested any comments from Committee Members.

Carl McPherson: Understands that the solutions that were developed were not to the satisfaction of all. Unforeseen consequences of the traffic controls now demand a need for review and revision. He does not believe it is wise to throw out everything that has been accomplished. Wishes to look at the bigger picture of traffic patterns external to the neighborhood.

Mary Conlow: Had always had concerns about the issue but knew measures were temporary. Was happy to be able to see what happened with these traffic controls in place. Asked Tim Urban to help the City enforce the truck route ordinance by communicating to trucking firms that deliver to the Uptown Shopping Center. Was bothered by the process the city used. Does not believe the city exhausted all communication tools at their disposal. Would like to see the city start at the beginning and involve those neighbors north of Forest and include plans for future development.

Dennis Rich: No easy answers to the problem, just shifted the headache onto other streets. Speed is a problem all over the city.

Jim Windsor: Gary Fox will work with representatives of all of the neighborhoods.

Bob Saf: Believes when we correct a situation it creates another problem. Sees the traffic from Madrid, Johnston, and Ankeny on streets that were never designed to handle that traffic. Problems were not expected. Asked the neighborhoods to be patient . . . and allow the city to put the temporary measures in.

George Robinson: Read from page 2 of the November 20 meeting agenda. He agrees with all except Item #2.

Kevin Williamson: Believe making one street undesirable just moves the problem to another. Wants to look at the big picture and start identifying where traffic is coming from. Interested in seeing future speed tables.

Sgt. Jack Beardsley: Explained the complaint process for noncompliance at STOP signs and speeding.

John Morrissey: Stated he was in favor of the recommendations and would vote in favor of them again. Not the Committee's job to control motorists from Ankeny and Johnston. Asked that neighbors on 42nd Street and beyond be willing to spend time to work toward solutions. He recognizes the new issues now, but is disinclined to change anything on the south end of 41st Street, but not yet convinced that the measures taken at the north end are appropriate and feels they need more work.

Gary Fox: There were as many if not more vehicles 15 years ago as there are now. However, there have been many changes in the way people drive. Lack of respect for traffic controls in place and speeding, etc.

MOTION: Jim Windsor moved to accept all items, except Item #3, and to continue to work with the neighborhoods regarding traffic calming; seconded by Bob Saf. Motion failed 4:6

MOTION: Carl McPherson moved that each item be considered individually. Motion failed 4:6

MOTION: George Robinson moved that Items 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8 be approved and that the Committee continue to work with the neighborhoods toward traffic calming; seconded by Committee member (?) Motion carried 9:1

MOTION: Jim Windsor moved Item #2 to leave the right-turn only traffic control on 41st at University, but not allow traffic to cross University straight to access the shopping

area and that additional pedestrian signing be tabled; seconded by Kevin Williamson. Motion carried 7:3

MOTION: George Robinson moved that Item #3 be tabled until the next Traffic Safety Committee meeting; seconded by Mary Conlow. Motion carried 6:4

2. Other New Business

There was no other new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Schomer
Recording Secretary

