



TRAFFIC COMMISSION

City Hall—Council Chambers, 590 40th Ave NE

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

6:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Schluender at 6:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Ciesynski, Davis, Finkelson, Nekora, Schluender

Staff present: Kathy Young, Assistant City Engineer
Captain Markham, Police

Council Liaison: Amáda Márquez Simula (arrived late)

APPROVE MINUTES

1. Motioned by Finkelson, seconded by Davis, to approve the minutes of August 17, 2021 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Residents Present: Erikka Curran, 4220 6th Street

2. REQUEST FOR STOP SIGNS AT THE INTERSECTION OF 6TH STREET AND 41ST AVENUE

Mr. Nathan Maghan and Ms. Erikka Curran have requested stop or yield signs at the intersection of 6th Street and 41st Avenue. The concern is accidents and near misses at the intersection.

The Traffic Commission tabled this item at the previous meeting to the September meeting pending updated accident information.

Captain Markham presented the two accident reports from August 5 and August 14, 2021. Due to these two recent accidents, this intersection meets the MMUTCD criteria for stop signs.

Davis stated that 5th St currently has stop signs stopping traffic east and west. He would like traffic control to be opposite of each other, meaning he would like to stop traffic on 6th St versus 41st Ave. He questioned why traffic is being stopped on 41st Ave. Young advised it's felt there is more north-south traffic at the intersection than east-west traffic.

Finkelson questioned removing the stop sign at 5th St and 41st Ave because there are two stop signs in a row on short blocks. Young advised this is because there's a T-intersection at 4th St and 41st Ave; traffic on 4th St wanting to go eastbound on 41st would need to stop to make the turn and then would have a stop sign. Westbound traffic on 41st Ave, even though they stop at 5th and 41st, would be required to stop at the T-intersection before proceeding. Because this is a T-intersection

drivers are already slowing down in order to turn onto 4th St. Removing the stop signs at 5th St and 41st Ave would create an uncontrolled intersection.

Davis would like to see the stop signs alternate like on 42nd Ave where they are going in opposite directions, i.e., 5th St east-west, 6th St north-south, 7th St east-west, Washington St north-south and Jefferson east-west and feels it would make sense to alternate. There's a desire among commissioners to have a system to try to remain consistent when making these decisions. Ciesynski feels a stop sign stopping traffic north-south would be better than east-west on this particular corner. Young advised to keep in mind that as you control two directions of traffic at a 4-way intersection, the traffic that doesn't need to slow down or stop will probably go faster.

Finkelson stated there are currently no stop signs on 5th St from 40th to 44th Ave. Stopping traffic on 41st Ave at 6th and 5th St has traffic only going one-half block before stopping. This is not far enough for drivers to speed up much so feels stopping north-south traffic on 5th St is better; the blocks are longer and there's more distance before drivers would have to stop at 4th St. Also feels the east-west local traffic is more likely to obey the speed limit. Young advised the rationale is that the east-west streets consist of mostly local traffic versus the north-south streets. Ciesynski stated that if you change the stop sign on 5th St to north-south, how many drivers, after driving this stretch without stop signs would even see it. How would you identify the stop sign change to drivers who consistently use that thoroughfare?

Davis stated that if the commission stops traffic on 41st Ave drivers would need to stop at 6th, 5th and 4th. If there are too many stop signs in a row drivers tend to not fully stop. Finkelson added the optimum would be to stop east-west traffic on 41st at 6th and change the stop sign at 41st and 5th to stop traffic on 5th St instead of 41st Ave. Schluender likes this idea but does not feel we should tie this item to another change that will take another meeting where it may or may not be approved. He would feel terrible if there was another accident and we could have gotten stop signs up more quickly at 6th and 41st. Davis reiterated that if we flipped the direction of the stop signs on 5th St we would need some type of warning signs for the traffic change. Young advised we normally put bright red flags on any new signs for 1-2 months to draw attention to them, but the flags can stay up longer if necessary. Nekora asked if a flashing light could be put on them. Young advised the flashing lights are limited to high volume roads.

Schluender suggested taking a look at the stop sign pattern going forward. Young suggested the motion could read stopping traffic on either 41st Ave or 6th St, which would provide more flexibility at the hearing. Also, if commissioners call for a yield sign they cannot change to a stop sign, but if they call for a stop sign they can change it to a yield sign, or they can call for either yield or stop signs, then the public would know that both are under consideration.

Captain Markham suggested putting up stop signs for north-south traffic to keep it easy and simple. There's already an east-west stop sign at 5th St and Jefferson St.

Motion by Finkelson to call a Public Hearing to install stop signs at the intersection of 6th Street and 41st Avenue stopping traffic on 6th Street. Seconded by Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Residents Present: David Wenzel, 5001 Jackson St (via Zoom)

3. REQUEST FOR 4-WAY STOP SIGNS AT THE INTERSECTION OF JACKSON STREET AND 50TH AVENUE

Mr. David Wenzel has requested the traffic control be changed from a two-way stop to a four-way stop at the intersection of Jackson Street and 50th Avenue. The concern is accidents and near misses at the intersection.

Staff reviewed visibility at the intersection and found it to be good. On Jackson Street, traffic stops at 49th Avenue and 51st Avenue. On 50th Avenue, traffic stops at Central Ave, Jackson St, and Monroe St. Supplemental "Cross Traffic Does Not Stop" signs were recently added to the stop sign posts on 50th Avenue.

The Police Department found one reported accident in both 2014 and 2016, two accidents in 2019 and one accident in 2021. The most recent accident was after the supplemental signs were installed. The driver on 50th Avenue failing to stop indicated she was unable to see the sign because the sun was in her eyes.

Mr. Wenzel lives on the corner of 50th and Jackson St and works facing the intersection. States he hears a lot of horns honking and screeching brakes. He inquired about this approximately one month ago and "Cross Traffic Does Not Stop" signs were added, which has helped somewhat. However, there was a crash recently and he feels the stop signs should either be reversed or the intersection should be a 4-way stop. Westbound traffic from Central Ave can't see because there are too many cars parked on the street, so they creep into the intersection and/or roll the stop sign which causes the north-south drivers to slam on their brakes. From what he sees out the window, local drivers going north-south on Jackson St know to drive slowly so they're almost stopping anyway a lot of the time.

Schluender stated on 50th Ave there are stop signs at Monroe St, Jackson St, and Central Ave. He isn't sure about reversing the stop signs, especially if people are used to them. The intersection does not meet the MMUTCD guidelines for a 4-way stop. He asked if the problem is drivers coming from Central Ave or is it evenly problematic. Mr. Wenzel advised its drivers coming from Central Ave, very rarely is it eastbound traffic. Mr. Wenzel also mentioned there are two duplexes on either side of him that don't have enough parking spaces in their driveways. As a result, there are even more cars parked on the street and causes part of the problem. Davis asked about designating no parking. Young advised commissioners would need to call a public hearing. Ciesynski asked if the cars are parked overnight. Mr. Wenzel stated the cars belong to people who live there so they're often there during the day and then may be moved to the other side of the driveway at night, etc.

Schluender asked about corner restricted parking to provide better visibility at intersections. Young advised we have done this in other parts of the City. Captain Markham would like to send officers out first to check the parking situation to see if this is the issue. Feels spending enforcement time may help. Young advised there are also high volume commercial businesses on

each side of 50th Ave. The street is not much wider than a typical city street and with parking on both sides and cars going in out of the businesses; it creates a lot of traffic in that one-half to full block area. A public hearing is required for yellow curbing but this is an area where we could use a flashing light on the stop sign. Captain Markham suggested stop bar lines on the street for which no public hearing is needed. Young advised there is yellow curb at the stop signs on one side of the street. Captain Markham feels we should start with the stop bars and he will send parking enforcement for approximately 1-2 months.

Motion by Schluender to table this item for further reports from Police after police enforcement, and direct Public Works to add stop bars and flashing lights to the existing stop signs. Seconded by Finkelson. Motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

City Engineer

In response to questions at the last meeting:

MMUTCD DEFINITIONS: For reported accidents, Young would strongly recommend to only use accidents that have been reported to the Police Department because that sets a standard. When residents are at a meeting and they talk about other accidents, commissioners can certainly take this into consideration as anecdotal testimony, but when deciding on traffic control, she would recommend only using accidents reported to the Police Department.

MMUTCD GUIDELINES: The MMUTCD guidelines are a somewhat fuzzy area. To deviate from the guidelines you are supposed to have an engineering study that provides a reason for deviating from those guidelines. Therefore, staff will always recommend following the MMUTCD guidelines. If the Traffic Commission has strong feelings and doesn't agree, it is certainly within their purview to call for a public hearing to explore traffic control at any intersection. The Traffic Commission is a recommending body to the City Council, but it's ultimately the City Council's decision. The Traffic Commission has the option to put in a recommended motion and an alternate motion.

PAST PRACTICES FOR STOP SIGN INSTALLATIONS: There is no real policy or practice that's been adopted by the City Council for stop or yield signs, so the previous Traffic Commissions have just looked at requests on an intersection by intersection basis

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AT CENTRAL AVENUE AND 40TH AVENUE CONSTRUCTION: Unfortunately it looks like the construction will continue through winter and into spring so the barricades and pedestrian movement will not be revised until then. When the contractor put together the detour plan for pedestrians, it was required to go through MnDOT and Anoka County. The contractor did approach MnDOT to try to put in a temporary crossing at Gould Ave but it was denied. So there really is no good way to make a change at the intersection. The traffic is heavy enough on Central and 40th Ave that there's really no way to direct pedestrians safely into the street and around the construction.

Police Chief

Captain Markham presented the speed count results for 49th Ave at Jefferson St. Ciesynski asked if the box could be moved farther down the road. Where it's currently located there's only one-half

block before the stop sign which is not much time for cars to pick up speed. Traffic going towards University Ave is much faster than Central Ave so this may be a better option.

Commissioners

Finkelson stated the stop sign maps included in their packets are way more helpful than the zoomed in google maps; the google maps do not show the traffic control signs. The stop sign maps make it much easier to conceptualize everything and see exactly where stop and yield signs are located. He would prefer these types of maps for stop sign related requests if at all possible.

Davis asked if it's possible to have an arrow within certain street signs that indicates the direction of the street. There are a number of intersections where it's difficult to know which way the street actually goes, i.e., at 44th Ave and Arthur St there's three sets of street signs, Arthur St, Arthur Pl, and 44th Ave. Also, at 39th Ave and Arthur St it's difficult to see where Arthur St turns into Hart Blvd. It would be helpful if there was an arrow on the street sign to indicate where the street changes to Hart Blvd.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Davis, seconded by Ciesynski to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.