

Morgantown Pedestrian Safety Board Meeting Minutes
Public Safety Building – Training Room 1
4:30 – 5:30 PM
February 12, 2018

The Morgantown Pedestrian Safety Board's mission is to promote a walkable environment throughout the City by developing safe, attractive, and accessible walkways that connect neighborhoods and destinations.

4:30 pm Call meeting to order

I. **SKIPPED Introductions:**

Members (Quorum Present): Bill Reger-Nash, Matt Cross, Jessica Bladow, Jimmie Simmons, Dan Shook, Penny Kotska, Jan Derry, Janet Fraser, and Stan Cohen

Ex-officio: Jing Zhang, Bill Austin, Alex Stockdale, Kenny Holloway, Kim Hartsell, Captain McCabe, Bill Kawecki, and Jenny Selin

Guest: Vaike Haas, William Blosser, family of Leah Berhanu, and lots of students (~30 total)

Absent: Gypsie Denzine, Jen MacDonald, George Lilley, Maria Smith, Ella Belling, Amy Boggs, and Drew Gatlin

II. **SKIPPED Approval of December 11, 2017 Minutes. Motion by ____ second by ____, Passed by (unanimous voice vote).**

Approval of January 8, 2018 Minutes. Motion by ____ second by ____, Passed by (unanimous voice vote).

III. **SKIPPED Officer's Reports**

- Bill Reger-Nash: how to help the Chair and activities of the Board

IV. **SKIPPED Action Item Follow-up**

- Matt:
 - Snow Removal Assistance Program → Neighborhood Coordinating Council (NCC)
 - Members with low attendance (less than 4 meetings in 2017):
 - Christiaan Abildso
 - Gypsie Denzine
 - Jan Derry
 - Dwight Harshbarger
 - Discussion with Ryan Simonton:
 - Would annexing schools that have moved outside the City limits help us improve our Safe Routes to Schools Programs?
 - What liabilities do schools have for kids that walk/bike/skate to school?
 - What liability (if any) does the DOH/City have (based on road ownership) for not having sidewalks/crosswalks to schools?
- Jenny/Alex/Matt – progress on sidewalk program?

- Discussed at council of the whole
- Sidewalk fund total (\$100,000?; \$200,000?)
- Funding mechanisms for sidewalk code enforcement?
- Ped. Board Funding in City Budget?
- Captain McCabe – total number of pedestrian accidents (1/month said Damien)

V. **Special Item – NOTE: This was the only agenda item discussed.**

- Due to the pedestrian fatality of a WVU student at Patteson Drive and Morrill Way that occurred on Feb. 1st, some WVU students have been invited for a conversation about concerns, safety, and education.
- Brent Scott – lifelong member of Morgantown, senior of WVU, representative of SGA (Student Government Association)
 - Prepared speech about his friend, Leah. Death of amazing young woman
 - Want to perform safe walk event to make walking in Morgantown & at WVU safer
- Syihan Mohamad
 - Mentioned another incident at the same location
 - Would like to work with us to bring improvement ideas to DOH
 - Overhead street lights weren't working night of the death; this isn't okay
 - 6-6:30PM incident
 - Timing of the pedestrian phases were discussed:
 - This intersection (Patteson & Morrill) is concurrent pedestrian – Syihan advocated for an exclusive signal here and at the following intersections as well:
 - University & Stewart (Rusted Musket)
 - Mon Blvd & (CAC)
 - Chestnut Ridge & Pineview
 - The fact that so many students are here should be proof that they care greatly
 - Matt Cross mentioned:
 - Safety vests
 - Overhead lights need to be fixed; that they are out is inexcusable (despite any construction excuses)
 - Asked Bill Austin about exclusive phases for these intersections
 - Exclusive phases are a good idea for protecting pedestrians; the trick is to still allow vehicles to have adequate flow as well
 - MPO encourages DOH to look at pedestrians as part of their responsibility too
 - These are DOH roads; and DOH's primary focus has been moving automobiles to date
 - Lighting situation was brought to the DOH's attention
 - DOH lacking in funding and manpower
 - Mr. Halloway (Public Works)

- Exclusive signal is safe for pedestrians; however, vehicles can still turn right on red which gives pedestrians a false sense that everyone will stop. Therefore an exclusive signal will not be an ultimate fix to this intersection.
 - Alex Stockdale – Assistant City Engineer
 - If vehicles are traveling 45+ mph the fix to the intersection will need to address speed because pedestrians will die if hit at this speed.
 - Not talking about posted speed limit, but actual travel speed; therefore, need vehicles and pedestrians separated
 - Alex suggested overhead pedestrian bridge (pedestrians would need to use stairs or ramp/elevator)
 - Tri ramp across intersection → need DOH to relinquish rights on their streets crossing (church to Collesium & Collesium to CAC)
 - City has manpower, funding, and drive
 - Could add physical barriers to prevent pedestrians from crossing onto road from sidewalk
 - Vaike Haas stopped using this intersection because she decided that it was too dangerous; she then mentioned that adding physical barriers, like trees would slow drivers more naturally than just reducing the speed limit signs.
 - Alex: TAP: Transportation Alternative Plan – gets tied up in reviewing process with DOH who owns 60' right of way
 - Alex is a WVU graduate
 - Captain McCabe
 - Until investigation is complete, no details about the incident will be released
 - DOH was notified about these lights at least 3 times; lights weren't working that night (miraculously lights are getting fixed now, even if they're not all on yet)
 - Everyone is frustrated with DOH (avg. speed is 41 mph); at this speed vehicles and pedestrians need to be separated by physical barrier
 - The solution is overhead crossings – Mountainlair would be the perfect place to put an overhead crossing; not 200' away where very few students cross
 - Alex Stockdale – City of Pittsburgh example
 - PennDOT – relinquished their rights from that City & allow their City gov't to have responsibility of the roads inside the City
 - Kenny Holloway is trying to engineer out any potential incident
 - Either climb stairs or ramp to overhead crossing
 - Penny Kotska (Pedestrian Safety Board Member)

- Frustrated because she is hearing victim blaming; as children we are taught that we are responsible as crosser/ walker and again as driver
 - Students and family want to know what we can do right now
 - Jersey barriers don't sound so difficult
 - DOH – resolving themselves of liability
 - We have precious young people in this community that ought to be protected; whether they're looking at their phones, their clothes are dark, or the lights aren't on
- Jenny Selin (City Council)
 - That intersection has had frequent incidents and that stretch of road has had several fatal incidents as well
 - DOH has a plan in place to improve the lighting along this corridor this year
 - Sometimes pedestrian plans involve lowering of speed limits
- Matt Cross
 - Requested that flyers about safety get shared with pedestrians
- Vaike Haas
 - Infrastructure can be made to move same number of cars with still slowing down the speed limit
- Alex Stockdale
 - Can lower speed limit (Kenny puts the signs in)
 - We can't fix this on a DOH street though
 - Penny asked what she needs
 - Alex says she needs ability to do that; DOH relinquish liability to allow City to take these streets over
- Bill Kawecki (City Mayor)
 - Thanked everyone in attendance for their concern. Apologized that there had to be a situation like this to get momentum to make something happen.
 - Mentioned that we are working on updating the Morgantown Pedestrian Plan now to identify improvements and solutions
 - Good solutions have been brought up, but they are not the only solutions
- Matt's passion is philosophy and behavior
 - He walked to school as a kid himself
 - He stated that it is key to educate ourselves on how to behave as pedestrians
 - Matt is advocating that we only cross legally
 - Matt mentioned that he is pleased to see students here to participate in building and improving their community
- Jimmie Simmons
 - Pleased to see the energy in this room; we've been needing this
 - We've had incidents before this one
 - We're going to go in many directions to figure out how to make our pedestrians safe

- We need to use something that is a strength
 - We don't need comparative studies; we are unique; we are the state university; we should use this power to get something done
 - If you want someone to listen, speak as students, faculty members, administrators of WVU; we don't need the road blocks that are put up by bureaucracy
 - We are caregivers; we don't have to be tied to what other cities do in WV
- Matt to attend SGA meeting Wednesday in the Mountainlair
- Bill Reger-Nash
 - Had the bad fortune of serving on the WV legislature
 - Politicians only go where they have the legs to stand on; otherwise the inertia will cater only to motorized vehicles
 - What we need to do is to state that we have a concern here
 - Students have more power than anyone at university because the politicians will listen to this group
- Stan Cohen
 - Retired faculty member 2 phrases we should use less:
 1. "we don't do this here" – we can innovate in this city; we have a lot of talent here; he mentioned that he just came back from biking in Florida where he observed that the turn lane has a separate light so that when the pedestrian light is on, cars can't turn right
 - He advocated for using the energy of city/county to influence the DOH; instead of just looking at traffic flow, let's talk about safe pedestrian flow
 - State has a complete streets program; they're at a stage where they haven't even populated committee to back this policy
 - Stan speaking to students: get your energy together and vocalize where you feel unsafe and make it obvious; we don't want to have another tragic event like this
- Student:
 - A lot of energy from students; asked who they needed to petition to fix this
 - Someone suggested the Secretary of Transportation: Tom Smith
- Kenny Holloway said that people shouldn't get run over in the street (like animals in the street; this is not right)
- Bill Austin – MPO mentioned the urban area long range transportation plan (which includes automobiles, pedestrians, and bikers) – identify potential users and design facilities for them
 - Looking to get complete streets advisory commission up and running

- Updating plan for the next 6 months; he had planned a presentation which is now not going to happen tonight
 - Suggested writing letters for
 - Long term strategy is to provide input for our long range plan
 - This kind of inertia can make things happen; but we need a plan to make things happen
 - Strongly support that this intersection brought all of us together to get something done to make our community safer
 - We may be able to get an intersection fixed, but we need to get this in writing
- Student (Styphen Woerner)
 - He is an Eagle Scout and has been living here in Morgantown since he was eight years old
 - Agrees that an engineering solution is the right plan
 - Frustrated that it will take so long to fix this
 - Asked: How do we fix this for the upcoming winters so we can reduce the incidents?
- Jenny Selin says by next fall we should have improved lighting in this area
- Rebecca Berhanu (Leah's sister)
 - Says that we need to stand up for those that follow the rules when walking; not just preach on how to be better pedestrians (snaps of agreement from the room)
- Vaike Haas – suggested a temporary installation of bump outs or to narrow the roads for cars as a temporary fix to the intersection
 - She further mentioned the interesting crosswalks in Fairmont and the potential of incorporating International PARK(ing) Day – which provides people the opportunity to temporarily turn on-street parking spots into public spaces
- Jimmie Simmons mentioned that she taught college students and could see teachable moments – like this one. She then suggested looking for safe alternate routes because pedestrian safety means staying off dangerous routes.
- Alex Stockdale – suggested raising money for this specific intersection; cash speaks
- Matt Cross – suggested using flashlights while crossing
- Janet Fraser – mentioned that the WV state legislature is still meeting for next month; they as elected officials can put pressure on the DOH; we are a unique City; write to the DOH, write to elected officials; do it consistently; make your voices heard
- Student
 - Originally from Chicago; when she learned how to drive she was always on the lookout for pedestrians; since she is from a larger City, she is accustomed to actively looking for pedestrians
 - Her Question: What are we doing to educate the drivers?

- Morgantown is a small city (esp. in comparison to Chicago)
- Matt Cross – mentioned that his pet peeve is drivers; he wants to get PSA into WVU student community
- A student who got hit at the intersection described her experience stating that the driver who hit her travels that route every morning. He knew that she was on the crosswalk; his car wasn't moving when she started in the crosswalk. This was at ~7:30AM; the driver got cited for failure to yield to her and she went to court for the case and the driver was able to get the citation removed. This is unacceptable. Something as significant as hitting a pedestrian (who is rightfully in a crosswalk) should not go without consequences.
- Bill Kawecki asked students to copy the city on correspondence that they have with WV Representatives and suggested petitioning Tom Smith & Donnie Williams
- Jenny Selin asked students to keep their organizations involved in our board because their feedback makes a big impact
- Brent Scott summarized that he can see that the DOH isn't doing their part
 - SGA supports transfer of ROW to City
 - Time to act is now
- Bill Kawecki – warned that we need to evaluate the implications of obtaining the ROW from the DOH. He said that if the City decides to push for DOH ROW (Right-of-Way) that we will need the money to come with the ROW acquisition.
- Rebecca Berhanu – asked why the DOH doesn't want to apply solutions to make pedestrians safer
- Jessica Bladow suggested that Brent invite the pedestrian safety board and the DOH to the solidarity walk that he had mentioned. Bill Austin said if Brent sent him an email than he could pass the word around.
- Student asked Alex how long it took PennDOT to relinquish ROW to Pittsburgh. Alex said she didn't know and then suggested petitioning important people to ask for this acquisition, like President Gordon Gee & Bob Huggins.
 - Bill Austin then suggested that we get funds
 - Started with Brent; only fair that it should end here as well
- Matt thanked everyone for their attendance

VI. SKIPPED New Business

- MPO Pedestrian Safety Plan Update – Jing Zhang
- TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) Grants for new walkways – Bill Austin
- Officer Elections
- Subcommittee Progress:
 - Intern:
 - Landscape Architecture – Vaike Haas
 - School of Public health – Bobbi Sykes

- Center for Service Learning
 - Safe Routes to School:
 - Crosswalks:
 - Lighting:
 - Traffic Calming:

VII. SKIPPED Old Business

- Cost Sharing Connecting Networks of Sidewalks (CNS) – who qualifies for \$?
- Create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound) goals for our Board
 - Lighting
 - Walking Signals
- Comprehensive planning with the Bike Board/Mainstreet Morgantown/ Green Team
- Sidewalk Improvement Incentives: wait for MPO report before further discussion

VIII. SKIPPED Upcoming Events

- Robyn Hess – City Grant Writer will discuss funding opportunities/strategies at the next Ped. Board Meeting

IX. SKIPPED Reports

- Mountain Line Maria Smith:
- WVU Kim Hartsell:
- Rail Trail Ella Belling:
- MPO Bill Austin:
- City Engineer Damien Davis:
- City Council Jenny Selin:
- Police Captain McCabe:
- Traffic Commission Matt Cross:

X. SKIPPED Action Items

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Next meeting: March 12, 2018, Training Room 1, Public Safety Building, 4:30 – 5:30 pm.