

Livable Streets Task Force
Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2015 @ 5pm
Whittier Alliance

Attendees: Paul Shanafelt, Kathy DeKrey, Dave LaViolette, Hosu Klessig
Shane Morton (Public Works), Lonni Koranda (Public Works)

Upcoming Whittier Projects (per Public Works): Crosswalk and flashers at 25th St & 3rd Ave. This was requested by Mia. The cost for the equipment is \$55,000 and is not funded by the city, although they do install the crosswalk flashers. The only other upcoming PW project is a potential protected bike lane on Blaisdell Ave.

Public Works Conversation with Shane Morton & Lonni Koranda

PW strictly deals with signage, paint, and traffic signal timing. Bump outs, speed humps, flashers, etc. can be requested but funded through grants, n'hood organizations, and donations/fundraisers. Traffic light timing was reconfigured earlier this year and seems to be working well so far.

Shane and Lonni drove around Whittier to get a feel for the neighborhood; they noted 27th St & 1st Ave in particular as an intersection that could be improved. Poor sightlines likely the cause of problems.

PW noted that they are directed to use minimal signage, which is actually better for drivers so they can focus on the road. Generally Traffic Control determines where signage should be placed/changed and sends referrals to PW. They will be putting "no parking within 30 ft of stop sign" placards beneath some n'hood stop signs. Task Force indicated the "no parking w/arrow" signs seem to be more effective.

PW does not paint curbs because they are not visible in winter, they don't have budget/staff for them, and they have 10,000 intersections and 4,000 crosswalks in the city they would need to re-paint each year. PW is not interested in a pilot project for painting curbs. If citizens do so, it would be considered vandalism and removed. Former councilmember Meg Tuthill advocated for painted curbs in years' past.

When asked about speed humps, PW indicated they cost \$7500 per pair and were not funded by the city. They could only be installed on local roadways – any street with painted lines is ineligible. These need to be approved by city council and would need 75% of affected block's property owner signatures (number is flexible...an exception would be if property owners don't sign off but tenants overwhelmingly want them).

Lots of focus on accidents at 28th St & Stevens Ave. PW stated they would need to look at causes, such as sightlines, traffic calming, etc. Dave mentioned the street goes from having parking on both sides to only one side; that coupled with the freeway access seems to be a cause for speeding on Stevens.

Hosu pointed out (and confirmed by PW) that calming traffic/speeds on certain streets could possibly push traffic to adjacent streets.

PW indicated potential I-35W access project could drastically change Stevens Ave. There is a proposed northbound exit onto Stevens (north of Lake St) from I-35W.

All Whittier n'hood streets are 30mph. This is state-mandated (MnDOT). Changing speed limits would go through legislation at state level. One successful change stemming from PW request was on 15th St SE and it went from 30 to 25mph. There was no speed change from traffic study. PW could collect speed data on per request in Whittier. They collect data, we determine if data is going to help with speed hump/signage proposals. They cannot collect speed/volume data in winter. Speed/volume data could start being collected in spring with the possibility of speed humps in place by fall.

Hosu: what are ways to decrease traffic speeds?

PW: having parking on both sides of the street calms traffic. Lots of trees on boulevard create a canopy for tunnel vision. Traffic circles, speed humps, bump outs.

PW noted that all new projects include bump outs. Very hard to retrofit existing intersections, however. Traffic circles are not funded by city. Needs property owner approval (75% block) and council approval.

PW control intersections w/stop signs and lights as needed. When volume or crashes at an intersection go over a certain threshold, they will add stop signs (4-way vs 2-way).

Whittier has high traffic volume and crash counts due to central city location. Lots of traffic entering/exiting throughout the day.

PW needs help from Task Force in identifying the following regarding Whittier intersections:

- what can be fixed?
- what times/days-of-week are they most problematic?
- what are the issues?
- what is wrong with the engineering (sightlines, parking, trees, poles, etc.)?

It was suggested that the Task Force identifies a few major problem intersections to focus on initially. PW will start collecting crash/traffic volume data from Clara Schmidt-Gonzalez (Traffic Control) and will subsequently cue the Task Force in on data-driven problem intersections. The Task Force can focus a bit on the qualitative analysis (community input).

PW indicated we can start speed hump process now. Which street needs it the most? How do we secure funding? Suggested that Task Force drafts a proposal letter to see if it would get council (and PW) approval before proceeding with fundraising and getting block support.

Tasks:

Everyone should start thinking about the most problematic intersections and streets in Whittier that would be eligible for speed humps OR signage to increase visibility at intersections. Public Works wants the Task Force to start thinking of locations and *why* intersections/streets are problematic – it's up to PW to come up with solutions.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15pm.

Next meeting: TBD

Minutes respectfully submitted by Paul Shanafelt