

CITY OF NEWARK
Newark, Delaware

TRAFFIC SUBCOMMITTEE
CLEVELAND AVENUE ROADWAY IMPROVEMENT MEETING

MARCH 16, 2016
7:00 p.m.

In Attendance: A. Stuart Markham, District 6
Tom Coleman, Public Works & Wastewater
Maureen Feeney-Roser, Planning & Development Department
Fred Nelson, Newark Police Department
Mark Luszcz, Delaware Department of Transportation
Bob King, Delaware Department of Transportation
Matt Buckley, WRA
Skip Homiak, University of Delaware
Dave Gula, WILMAPCO/Newark Traffic Committee
Tom Parkins, Newark Traffic Committee
Don DelCollo, Newark Housing Authority/Newark resident
Susan Grasso, Newark Bicycle Committee
Carol Ireland, Bike Delaware
Amy Roe, NAACP/Newark resident
Eve Slap, Matt Slap Subaru
Julie Lacter, Porter Auto Group
Jen Wallace, Newark resident

1. INTRODUCTION

Mr. Coleman thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Mr. Coleman said complaints have been received that Cleveland Avenue is unsafe and doesn't meet the needs of the community. This is part is due to the added development of Alder Creek as well as the increasing student population west of Paper Mill Road. It is recognized that is an issue that will have a significant impact in the near future.

Mr. Coleman said the goal of the committee is to discuss the existing challenges with an effort to overcome these challenges by developing practical solutions and keeping in mind the goals and needs along the corridor and the impact it will have on the stakeholders.

Mr. Coleman said the first issue to be discussed are the existing issues on Cleveland Avenue. Mr. Coleman turned the floor over to Mr. Buckley to present the Hazard Elimination Plan.

2. PRESENTATION – HAZARD ELIMINATION PLAN

Mr. Luszczyk said the Hazard Elimination is an annual program run by DelDOT that is federally required. Mr. Luszczyk said every year the crash data is reviewed for the previous 3 years and the worst crash corridors are ranked in the state using a crash rate system. Mr. Luszczyk said he would be happy to provide further details to anyone that is interested. Mr. Luszczyk said Cleveland Avenue has shown up in program for several years and once again showed up last year. Mr. Luszczyk said a DelDOT paving project is scheduled in 2017 for Cleveland Avenue.

A. Cleveland Avenue/N. College Avenue

1. Intersection recently upgraded, audible signals do exist
2. 14 crashes from 2011-2014
3. Includes 2 pedestrian crashes
4. 1,000 pedestrians per hour

Observations:

- The turn movements on and off N. College Avenue are often blocked causing motorists to yield at the same time to pedestrian traffic.
- A leading pedestrian interval exists for approximately 7 seconds to establish right of way in the crosswalk. This causes conflicting right of way when pedestrians are still in the intersection.

Next Steps:

- The next steps for this intersection would be to evaluate a “Scramble Phase” or an all-way exclusive pedestrian phase. This would enable all pedestrians to enter the intersection at the same time crossing any direction and will be isolated from any vehicular traffic, with vehicle traffic being served separately.

Ms. Grasso asked how this affects the traffic flow from a traffic backup standpoint. Mr. Buckley said at this time this is not known, and would need to be looked into further. Mr. Buckley said at the intersection of Delaware Avenue and S. College it was discovered the green timing was underutilized due to pedestrians dominating the intersection. Mr. Luszczyk said any recommendations found in the presentation have not been reviewed in detail recently. Mr. Luszczyk said DelDOT is open to suggestions and willing to move forward with any recommendations the group supports.

Mr. DelCollo asked if scramble phase could occur at different times of the day. Mr. Luszczyk said due to federal mandates this isn't possible. Mr. Luszczyk said the phase may be skipped completely however, once the button is activated DelDOT is required by federal law to provide the pedestrian a standard amount of time to cross the intersection.

Mr. Coleman said one way to mitigate inefficiency during off peak hours at Delaware Avenue and S. College Avenue intersection was to allow right turns on red during certain times of the day. Mr. Luszcz said the timings and details could be presented a future meeting.

Mr. Markham asked if this is a complete list of recommendations for N. College Avenue. Mr. Markham said his constituents state they can't get out on the left turn phase. Mr. Buckley said there isn't crash data that would support a safety issue at this location. Mr. Buckley said the volumes for the southbound movement past Ray Street are very low and feels it would be more detrimental than a pedestrian scramble phase. Mr. Markham feels that if a left turn movement is prohibited he is concerned motorists will find an alternate route pushing traffic to other side streets. (ie: Ray Street, Wilbur Street, White Clay Drive, etc.) Mr. Coleman said this could be added into the model for review and consideration.

B. Cleveland Avenue - New London Road to Capital Trail

1. In 2005, H.E.P. a road diet was analyzed looking at taking 4 lanes and reducing to 2 lanes with 1 through lane from Paper Mill Road to Capital Trail
2. In 2012, H.E.P. converting Margaret Street and eliminating the thick leg at the Margaret St/Chapel Street intersection
3. Cleveland Avenue/Capital Trail – 32 northbound left turn crashes – one of the worst intersections in the state
4. Cleveland Avenue/N. Chapel Street/Margaret Street – 55 crashes over a 4-year period
5. Cleveland Avenue/Wilbur Street – 21 crashes; 2 pedestrians struck at the marked crosswalk
6. Cleveland Avenue from Chapel Street to Capital Trail – 29 EB/WB left turn crashes, 11 EB/WB rear-end crashes, 10 pedestrian crashes, 40 mid-block crashes

Observations:

- There is a lot of traffic queued up all over the place

Next Steps:

- To continue to review the Library Avenue/Capital Trail intersection
- Review Wilbur Street and seek other locations along the corridor providing immediate refuge allowing pedestrians to cross in two stages
- Consider altering Margaret Street to send traffic one-way away from the signal
- Road diet along Cleveland Avenue from Paper Mill Road to Library Avenue

Ms. Roe pointed out that during the study time frame Alder Creek was unoccupied and inquired as to the impact had the additional homes been occupied. Mr. Buckley said the data from 2015 to the present could be researched. Ms. Roe confirmed the homes were vacated during 2007.

Mr. Delcollo said there are approximately 64 units in Alder Creek. Mr. Delcollo said the primary goal is to provide the residents safe access to Main Street. Ms. Roe asked if historic data on vehicle and pedestrian crashes could be obtained when Cleveland Heights was fully occupied. Mr. Luszcz said the one drawback with using historic data is the statistics are pulled from a report that has been filtered as opposed to pulling the raw data.

Mr. DelCollo asked if a study has been conducted to find out where the vehicles are going. Mr. Buckley said a downfall to origin destination studies is the Bluetooth isn't able to pick up every cell phone with Bluetooth capability. Mr. Buckley said one way is to manually perform a license plate survey using video to process license plates. Mr. Luszcz said origin destination studies aren't normally performed for this what the committee is trying to achieve. Mr. Luszcz said an origin destination is very time consuming and very expensive, and more than likely DelDOT would use the regional traffic model to estimate the increased traffic on nearby streets.

Mr. Markham said he agrees with Mr. DelCollo that knowing where the traffic is coming and going is helpful. Additionally it helps council making decisions from a development standpoint. Mr. Luszcz said he would agree in terms of long term planning. Mr. Gula said WILMAPCO attempted an origin destination study on Route 141 corridor using Bluetooth devices. Mr. Gula said not all cell phones were captured, as a result they considered purchasing data using satellite relays for a more comprehensive look. Mr. Gula said with a request from the city, WILMAPCO could review inexpensive alternatives and consider the value in such options. Ms. Grasso feels this information would be useful for the Newark Bicycle Committee as well get a feel for how many bicyclists are local.

Ms. Slap said thinking back to 2007 her service and sales business has doubled and as a result the traffic has significantly increased. Ms. Slap said her concern is losing business due to the traffic impact.

Mr. Markham asked what the verdict is on the HAWK signal. Mr. Luszcz said DelDOT is continuing to monitor crashes and driver reactions at all three HAWK signal locations in Delaware. Mr. Luszcz said many other agencies have had success with them. Mr. Coleman asked what the difference is between traditional signals versus the HAWK signal. Mr. Luszcz said the HAWK signal is designed to stop motor vehicle traffic less often and to provide pedestrian safety. Mr. Luszcz said a HAWK signal could be considered on Cleveland Avenue.

Mr. Luszcz said the midblock refuge island is proven to disrupt traffic less and would be safer than a traffic signal or a HAWK signal. It would significantly reduce the delay for pedestrians crossing the street. Mr. Luszcz said the traffic gaps are more frequent than waiting for a gap in both directions.

Mr. Luszcz said another option would be rectangular rapid flash beacon that is a yellow stutter flash beacon versus a steady flash.

Ms. Roe said it is important to keep in mind at McKees Lane there are very few places for pedestrians to cross and get through. Mr. Buckley said CSX has talked about closing the tunnel in the future as this is their right of way.

Ms. Roe asked what the distance is between the crosswalk at UD Green to S. College Avenue versus the crosswalk at McKees Lane to Library Avenue. Mr. Buckley said the distance is approximately 200 feet longer. Mr. Luszcz said any daily traffic numbers can be looked up on DelDOT's website.

Ms. Roser asked in order for pedestrians to cross the road safely at McKees Lane and create a pedestrian refuge island would it only be possible with road diet option. Mr. Luszcz said he doesn't think anything can be done to narrow the lanes or possibly consider reducing to 10' lanes.

Mr. Gula asked if volumes could be obtained on S. Main Street before and after the conversion to a road diet. Mr. Gula said he is interested in whether accidents have been reduced as well. Mr. Luszcz said another place to look at is Philadelphia Pike. Mr. Coleman asked if there are any other roads in the state with 25,000 vehicles per day, one lane in each direction with a center turn lane. Mr. Luszcz said they will look into this. Ms. Slap said if this is considered it could present a traffic impact in getting from Ogletown Road to Cleveland Avenue. Mr. Luszcz said theoretically you could keep the double left off of Library Avenue and merge traffic back in. Mr. Luszcz said they realize the benefits from bicycle and pedestrian standpoint and challenges it presents from a motor vehicle standpoint.

Ms. Slap asked if anything could be done with the sidewalks for bicyclists and pedestrians. Ms. Grasso asked if the repaving project would include the sidewalks. Mr. Coleman said more than likely the repaving would only be face of curb to face of curb. Mr. Buckley said it would address the ADA needs on existing sidewalks and driveways.

Mr. Coleman said the next topic he would like to discuss is WILMAPCO's Newark Transportation Plan recommendations. Mr. Coleman said the Newark Bicycle Committee surveyed the corridor and identified issues and made some recommendations.

Capital Trail Intersection

Issues:

1. Drivers making right hand turns from Cleveland Avenue onto Library Avenue are not yielding properly to pedestrians.

Possible Solutions

1. Tom Coleman said one option would be to prohibit right turns on red or to install signage indicating must yield to pedestrians. Tom Coleman said they have been working with Matt B to install signage.

Ms. Grasso said she walks and rides her bike and often notices drivers don't yield to pedestrians. Ms. Grasso said the Newark Bicycle Committee is working to initiate an education campaign. Mr. Coleman said in an uncontrolled crosswalk he believes many drivers are unaware of the law that motorists must yield to pedestrians once they step into the crosswalk, however vehicles don't have to stop to allow pedestrians to enter the crosswalk.

Mr. Homiak said traveling on Cleveland Avenue making a left on Capital Trail you have to wait three to four light cycles. Mr. Buckley said at this intersection there are 500-600 right turns versus 200-300 right turns. Ms. Slap said she feels it is much better now. Mr. Luszczyk said every decision made at the intersection was a tradeoff and are confident that accidents will be reduced.

Mr. Markham asked if "Don't Block the Box" would be helpful. Mr. Coleman said Representative Baumbach spearheaded the request for Don't Block the Box at Main Street and Chapel Street. Mr. Coleman said the issue with this particular intersection was enforcement and where to violators over. Mr. Buckley said another problem that exists on Main Street, are the signal heads along Main Street are on a cable that connects two City of Newark utility poles that share space with communication cables. As the wind hits the signs and deflects the signal head cable the sign will shear fiber optic cables, etc. Mr. Luszczyk said there is signing and striping that could be done. Mr. Markham said one location he would recommend a "Don't Block the Box" is Route 273 and Library Avenue. Mr. DeCollo suggested the intersection at Delaware Avenue and Chapel Street.

Capital Trail to Pomeroy Trail

Suggestions:

1. Road diet with bike lanes east of Paper Mill Road/North Chapel Street
2. Two way cycle track along the North side of Cleveland Avenue from New London Road to Capital Trail
3. Off road bike and pedestrian path along the south side of White Clay Creek (behind the car dealerships)
4. Installation of a radar speed sign. Lt. Nelson said the police department has one sign.
5. Winner Boulevard – Consider a connector from Alder Creek and Winner Boulevard, north of Cleveland Avenue continuing to Christopher Street and Dean Drive.

Mr. Luszczyk said any recommendations of a larger scale would require working with WILMAPCO and DeIDOT planners for nominating a project to then be submitted through a prioritization process. Mr. Luszczyk said any recommendations within the curb line could be part of the paving project using DeIDOT funding. For example, signing, striping and traffic signals.

Mr. Coleman inquired if DeIDOT would address ADA compliance for sidewalks during repaving rehabilitation. Mr. Luszczyk said they would include curb ramps but not the mid-block sidewalks. Mr. Coleman said on W. Cleveland Avenue they won't address ADA compliance at driveway entrances or utility poles. Mr. Luszczyk said likely they will not. Mr. Coleman asked for DeIDOT to let him know the specifics of the items that would and wouldn't be included in the rehabilitation project. Mr. Coleman asked if sidewalks would be Community Transportation Fund (CTF) or Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) eligible. Mr. Luszczyk said sidewalks are TAP eligible and everything would be CTF eligible. Mr. Gula said normally TAP won't fund outside of the right of way. Mr. Buckley said in an ideal situation the Pedestrian Accessibility Route (PAR) would come through first to review ADA and longitudinal PAR along a corridor.

3. GOALS, SUGGESTIONS AND CHALLENGES FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Coleman said this committee is an AD HOC committee of the Traffic Committee and the overall goal would be for the committee to come to a vote for Traffic Committee approval and then present to city council.

Ms. Raptor said a concern from the car dealerships is customers getting to the dealership and pedestrians safety in crossing the street. Ms. Raptor said they don't want to see Cleveland Avenue be reduced to two lanes. Ms. Raptor said another issue is car carriers delivering vehicles to the lot. She feels prohibiting deliveries during certain times of the day would be effective.

Ms. Slap said the issue is also a matter of enforcement to prohibit left turns. Ms. Slap would not be in favor of reducing Cleveland Avenue to two lanes.

Mr. Buckley said one of DeIDOT's main concerns is safety and a collective consensus from the group. Mr. Luszczyk said DeIDOT is looking to improve safety and operations for all road users.

Mr. Homiak said from University of Delaware perspective the main concern would be student safety. Mr. Homiak would like to see street parking removed on Cleveland Avenue with one lane in each direction and a center turn lane. The concern is pedestrian safety with students crossing the street in between parked vehicles with no clear line of sight.

Mr. Homiak said he is concerned about the Cleveland Avenue section between Chapel Street and Capital Trail. He said over the years he has seen many accidents along the corridor. He is concerned about the safety and how the options may impact the traffic on Kirkwood Highway.

Mr. DelCollo said the Newark Housing Authority is concerned regarding the safety of Alder Creek residents. Mr. Coleman said that would be coming and going in general and safe access to Main Street. Mr. DelCollo said as well as safe access to ACME in College Square shopping center.

Ms. Roe said the NAACP is concerned about McKees Lane crossing and Ray Street area in regards to safe pedestrian crossing. Ms. Roe said on a larger scale she was concerned how this group was accountable, now realizing the group is accountable to the Traffic Committee. Ms. Roe said she would like to see an equitable distribution of stakeholders and greater accountability than to the Traffic Committee. She feels the committee's recommendations should go to city council and feels council should be involved in establishing the parameters of the stakeholders.

Ms. Wallace said she would like to see traffic calming in general. She regularly travels Casho Mill Road, Barksdale Road, Cleveland Avenue to Capital Trail and has witnessed motorists driving aggressively in this area. She would like to see efforts to reduce aggressive driving.

Ms. Ireland said Bike Delaware's general goal is to make biking more accessible for transportation, recreation and exercise. The opportunities to allow for safer more enjoyable bicycling for all types of bicycle users. Ms. Ireland said a subgroup would be those that use the Pomeroy Trail and a key goal would be the Cleveland Avenue/Pomeroy Trail and is undesirable and awkward from a bicyclist point of view. The current layout is more conducive for pedestrians and not bicyclists. She supports the concept of a roundabout.

Ms. Grasso said she agrees with everything mentioned by Ms. Ireland. Ms. Grasso would like to develop bike infrastructure to separate bikes from vehicles. Ms. Grasso would like to see the committee give this some thought.

Ms. Grasso said the committee should look at infrastructure itself and feels Cleveland Avenue is an undesirable section of town. The traffic is has its challenges and the housing is unattractive. She feels Cleveland Avenue could become a special place in the community by changing the image. She would like to know what businesses would like to see and what employees would like to do during lunch time, and more economic opportunities. Ms. Grasso is interested in hearing from anyone that is interested in the topic to discuss in more detail.

Mr. Markham said he would like to see everyone benefit from the improvements that are implemented. (ie: bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists) Mr. Markham said he is looking for a balance in making decisions on city council. Mr. Markham is concerned for the long term residents that have lived on Cleveland Avenue for many years and how improvements will impact them.

Mr. Markham said the parking along Cleveland Avenue provides traffic calming and is concerned with where the cars will park if the on street parking is removed. He noted the parking in the rear of the homes is inefficient. Mr. Markham said another concern is the traffic impact of the Chapel Street intersection and moving cars and pedestrians through the intersection. Mr. Markham said he is looking at the big picture with a goal of finding a balance for everyone.

Mr. Gula said he is a member of the Traffic Committee. Mr. Gula said the idea for the group to come to a consensus. Mr. Gula said WILMAPCO looks at long term strategic, region and local planning. Mr. Gula said in trying to manage the traffic that exists and he wants the daily commuters to see the benefit. Mr. Gula reminded the committee that the people living and working along the corridor will be the ones most impacted by a negative situation. Mr. Gula said the goal would be to conduct research, provide discussion in working toward a consensus that would provide the most benefit for all users.

Lt. Nelson said the main concern from the police department would is safety. Lt. Nelson said due to Cleveland Avenue having the most accidents the goal would be to reduce accidents and improve safety.

Mr. Coleman said the Public Works Department concern are the intersections they receive the most complaints. The goal would be to improve traffic at the intersection of Paper Mill Road, various crosswalk upgrades, longitudinal bike traffic, improving safety at crosswalks, and the newly rearranged intersection at Library Avenue.

Mr. Coleman said the discussion regarding stakeholders has previously been discussed at a Traffic Committee meeting. Mr. Coleman said recommendations for additional stakeholders is welcomed and may be emailed to Mr. Coleman, Lt. Nelson or Ms. Cash.

Mr. Coleman asked what the expectancy is of the committee for frequency of meetings. Mr. Luszcz said DeIDOT has funding to available through DeIDOT safety program to begin modeling recommendations from the Newark Bicycle Committee letter. Mr. Luszcz said he would recommended reconvening in approximately three months. Mr. Buckley said he feels it would be advantageous to obtain an origin destination study and feels it would be beneficial for the long term. Mr. Gula said there will be significant costs associated and will research the cost and report back to the committee.

Mr. Luszcz said DeIDOT will research short term items for example, roundabouts, HAWK signals, scramble phases, diagonal phases, changing the signals, etc. Ms. Grasso asked if they will look at a protective intersection at Pomeroy Trail. Mr. Buckley said they could look at that as well. Mr. Buckley said any short term suggestion may be sent to Mr. Coleman for inclusion.

Mr. Coleman suggested a survey of Alder Creek residents with their preferred destinations. Mr. DeCollo will provide a total number and ages of children. Mr. Buckley said age ranges, number of residents that would like to bike or walk and where they would like to go would be helpful.

Mr. Markham said regarding planning there is thought in urban planning that you put the housing downtown so people drive less often. Mr. Markham asked how that affects the traffic model. Mr. Luszcz said their development coordination team may be able to answer the question. Mr. Buckley said the newer apartments now have parking where several years ago there was no parking available for students.

Mr. Coleman suggested the next meeting be in June. Ms. Roe said with a concerted effort to include additional stakeholders felt it would be beneficial to meet sooner. Mr. Coleman said the committee could meet in one month to discuss additional stakeholders. Ms. Roe said we should also help the Newark Housing Authority with the survey. Mr. Coleman said he would be willing to work with Newark Housing Authority with the survey and have it available for the next meeting. Mr. Coleman said an email will be sent out for the next meeting, the second month will be a site visit and the third month will be DeIDOT research, and fourth month public meeting.

Ms. Grasso asked if Mr. Coleman would send out an email summarizing all the goals and ideas that will be analyzed. Mr. Coleman asked for a copy of the Hazard Elimination Plan presentation.