Takoma Junction Task Force, Subcommittee B

April 20, 2011

Attending

Lorraine Pearsall, Jeff Trunzo, Seth Grimes, Susan Robb, Katrina Oprisko, Kay Daniels-Cohen, Hailu Legesse, Diana Kohn, Howard Kohn, Roger Schlegel

Joe Huebner, SS Carroll resident

Cederic Ward, Maryland SHA

Meeting Notes

The meeting convened shortly after 5 pm at the Historic Takoma building on Carroll Avenue.

Lorraine introduced the meeting goals, to discuss ideas related to signal improvements, pedestrian crosswalks, state criteria, the right person to talk to.

Seth: Let's also talk about process, how to get things done given all the jurisdictions involved.

Kay: There's a 13-second delay in the signal cycle. Susan: Everything is shut down, including pedestrian crossing. Also, it's a mistake to consider any part of the intersection signaling without considering the whole. Kay: The light on Sycamore coming into 410 is red while intersection in front of co-op is green.

Cedric: The 13 seconds could be a clearance time. I could look into this. The lights are set up as a single system, via one control cabinet that handles all the Takoma Junction signals. The Office of Traffic Safety oversees signal timing and plans and has come out recently to check vehicle detectors, some time since first task-force contact, in the last month or month and a half. Intersections typically have 3 cycles, am, pm & weekend, but I don't know what's in place here. I can look into it. The county is not involved.

The Office of Traffic Safety uses software to model based on traffic counts and signal timing and would visit on-site to verify.

Howard: The Montgomery County counterpart to Cedric said, several months ago, what Mayor Williams has said, that the intersection is out of sync with Montgomery County-controlled signalling.

Cedric: Other nearby intersections (NH & 410, Maple & 410, Flower & Carroll) are Montgomery County maintained. It could be desirable to the SHA to turn TJ over to the county. [SG: This opinion was not strongly expressed.]

Jeff: Does signal ownership affect upgrades?

Cedric: The signals in place are capable. The SHA has specs for signal controllers that require synchronization. With upgrade, the SHA would not necessarily retime the signals. It depends if there's a change in the type of signalization (e.g., left-turn arrows).

Normally the SHA does an every-3-year retiming. Not sure where we are on that cycle, but the state is looking at that (timing) now.

Susan: The assumption, correct or not, is that our lights are outdated.

Cedric: The signals in use can handle whatever configuration is programmed into them. They can be dialed into from a remote location (Hanover) for diagnosis.

Roger distributed a list of issues that have come up in meetings (pedestrian, traffic) and asked, Does the state examine pedestrian-vehicular interfaces? Seth: Add bicycle.

Cedric: Three years is a maximum for retiming. The state implemented a 3 ½ feet/second walking speed state-wide, which makes delays worse.

Susan: When I talked to you (Cedric), you said that it was planned that the Philadelphia walk signal would come on when … ???

Cedric: We will look at this when we go out to the intersection.

Jeff: Please explain permissive versus exclusive left-hand turn and other terminology, also the use of blinking red lights.

Cedric: Left turn flashing-red is "modified permissive-exclusive phase": Turn left of actual green, then goes to flashing red. Not sure it would work in this case because the width of the road is tight, would affect properties and change the character of the junction.

Lorraine: We're a historic district too.

Seth: The task force is really considering only a single round-about possibility, a single-lane round-about within the existing road width. Lorraine (later): Reinforced need to understand feasibility given streetscape, historic district.

Cedric: I would have to look into files to see if a round-about has been considered. We would look at pedestrian impact of any changes. Round-abouts typically require 70-80 feet width for an area like this one that carries buses, fire trucks, and they typically don't work as well if they're close to a signal. (In response to a question from Jeff:) Mini round-abouts aren't suitable for a road of this size. We can do round-about modeling; we look at vehicle type and balance. There would be significant impacts to nearby properties. We could look into a "concept study," taking into account congestions, pedestrians, crashes, requiring information gathering and making a case, to carry this forward to actual design.

Jeff: The task force's mandate is to make the whole area work better.

Susan: Is there a list of considerations that affect decisions to make changes?

Cedric: There's no set list, but we really want to maximize pedestrian safety, minimize congestion, idling. We would consider pedestrian flow. We would start with basic measurements of geometry.

Joe: Who has the jurisdiction on signage and crosswalks, for 410 and Carroll? Signals across Carroll have been discussed and are still desirable.

Cedric: A request would be sent to my office, for any kind of traffic control device, with the decision based on need and the primary consideration, safety.

Cedric (in response to a question from Lorraine): Phasing and timing are linked.

<u>Junction walk-around</u>

At approximately 6 pm, the group went outside to look at specific junction issues.

Regarding crosswalks across Carroll, downhill from the junction: According to Cedric there is an implied crosswalk only where there's a cross-street on both sides, which excludes Lee, Lincoln, and Boyd. An explicit crosswalk at Lee would require putting in curb cuts and would be complicated by

the utility pole and storm drain on the side of Carroll across from Lee. A crosswalk would be feasible at Manor Circle, again requiring curb cuts and possible sacrificing parking on the side opposite Manor Circle.

According to Cedric, crosswalk from the former TJ's market to near the co-op would require pedestrian signals. The ball-park cost for signals alone is $30-50 thousand. The stop line for cars heading east on Carroll would probably have to be moved back.

According to Cedric, any form of round-about within the current road width would not provide sufficient turning radius for large vehicles (e.g., trucks, buses) heading uphill on Carroll from the direction of the hospital and wishing to head east on Ethan Allen toward New Hampshire Avenue.

The group observed the operations of the pedestrian walk signals at the east end of Takoma Junction and noted that the bulbs in several of the pedestrian and vehicle signals were not operating.

The group noted that buses do not use the inset Carroll Avenue bus stop opposite the co-op and discussed reducing the turn radius for vehicles entering the junction on Ethan Allen, turning right to head downhill on Carroll Avenue. If the point-corner were reduced, whether or not the bus-stop inset were eliminated, the bus stop would need to remain set back from the intersection for safety reasons.

<u>Outstanding questions to be answered</u>

1. Where are we in the 3-year measurement and retiming cycle?
2. What's up with the 13-second dead-time delay?
3. Has the SHA studied Takoma Junction round-abouts in the past?