

Takoma Junction Task Force
Subcommittee C/Traffic & Signal Meeting
Wednesday, August 24, 2011
Meeting Notes

Task Force Members Present:

Lorig Charkoudian, Jim DiLuigi, Seth Grimes, Andy Kelemen, Howard Kohn, Katrina Oprisko, Lorraine Pearsall, Susan Robb, Jeff Trunzo.

Guests:

Takoma Park Police Chief Ronald Ricucci, Housing and Community Development Director Sara Daines

These notes record important points brought out at this meeting, which was an informal subcommittee meeting was not subject to the Maryland open-meetings requirements. Points are presented grouped by topic rather than in the order they were discussed. The meeting was a conversation however, and so points aren't always consistent.

State Highway Administration Contact & Junction Traffic

The TF explained its interactions with Cedric Ward of the SHA.

Chief Ricucci reported that the police department had a difficult time reaching someone at the SHA who could respond to questions, motivated by complaints received by the department, regarding signal timing. The PD had done surveys at 3 times, to determine signal timings. The biggest complaint was the difficulty drivers had getting out of Sycamore onto Ethan Allen. The PD heard from Woody Hood about signal status and plans to install video vehicle detectors and count-down pedestrian signals, targeting September.

The PD's impression was that junction congestion isn't highly significant. The e-mail the department sent out did calm down the immediate complaints due to the summer signal-timing change.

The intersection has been the source of complaints for years, especially pedestrian related. The PD will assign staff to monitor the AM & PM school-crossing hours for the first week of school.

Review of Junction Options

Seth Grimes reviewed a list of junction options.

1. Close the 2nd city-lot driveway, the one closer to the TPSS Co-op that was created for temporary use when the fire station was located on the city lot.

The chief consulted Daryl Braithwaite, who feels that having the 2nd driveway improves traffic flow.

2. The TF has discussed installation of a crosswalk from the former TJ's market location to the city lot.
3. The TF has discussed a change to the traffic signal and lane markings on Carroll Avenue, heading into Takoma Junction, to allow both left and right turns from the left of two lanes.
4. The TF has discussed a change to the lane markings in Carroll Avenue, in front of the fire station, to create a left-turn lane, in the intersection, for vehicles heading downhill on Philadelphia Avenue.
5. The TF has discussed extending the bus bay on Ethan Allen at BY Morrison Park, roughly across from the co-op, to create a second lane for traffic turning right onto Carroll Avenue or continuing straight in the direction of the fire station.

TF members noted that buses typically do not use the bay but instead stop in the traffic lane to pick up and discharge passengers. We noted that adding a 2nd lane would increase the crossing distance for pedestrians. It could allow for right turn on red although again there'd be an effect on pedestrian safety and standards might not allow right-turn-on-red in any case due to intersection geometry.

The chief stated that, given a city decision, the PD could enforce bus use of the bay for passenger pick up and discharge. This would involve first asking RideOn and Metrobus management to talk to drivers.

One suggestion is to make Sycamore one-way heading in from Ethan Allen. This would allow removal of the traffic signal at Sycamore and Ethan Allen.

TF members observed that this could allow the creation of parking spaces along one side of Sycamore between Ethan Allen and Columbia.

→As a to-do, Seth will ask the co-op, via Lorig Charkoudian and Steve Dubb, about creating more-visible one-way signs for the co-op lot next to Sycamore, also about the co-op's reaction to the idea of making Sycamore one way. [Done on Thursday August 25.]

→As a to-do, Seth will ask Daryl Braithwaite about restriping of the pedestrian crosswalk across Sycamore near Ethan Allen. [Done on Thursday August 25.]

6. The TF has discussed larger-scale road changes: 1) Creation of a round-about in the existing curb width near the former TJ's market and the co-op; 2) Creation of a round-about with additional space taken from the corner by BY Morrison Park; 3) Creation of a T intersection where Carroll would cross the current BY Morrison corner space to intersect Ethan Allen at a right angle; and 4) Creation of a T intersection where Ethan Allen would cross the current BY Morrison corner space to intersect Carroll Avenue at a right angle. The T intersection options would create an island in the intersection, which could facilitate pedestrian crossing. A three-way stop with the existing road configuration is also an option.

TF members noted the historic-district implications of any change to BY Morrison Park, also that certain changes could make the crossing less pedestrian and business friendly, but explained that it's the TF's responsibility to evaluate all options raised.

Chief Ricucci said that roundabouts do slow traffic and may provide better traffic flow although getting people adjusted to a round-about is a task. The PD is still doing Ward 6 enforcement 3 years after round-about installation. He noted that the SHA has round-about and other traffic standards, and he didn't see taking out any of BY Morrison Park. He observed that a round-about would probably eliminate two existing pedestrian crosswalks.

7. A TF member had proposed angle parking along the Carroll Avenue shopping strip. (The idea of reconfiguring the small lot adjacent to BY Morrison Park was withdrawn.)

Chief Ricucci said it doesn't look like there's enough space for angle parking along Carroll. Given the traffic lane, if it was created, it would have to be front-in, but it seems like there are too many vehicles passing by.

Traffic will be heavier after this week, after vacations end and school starts again.

Additional Points

Susan Robb asked about a mid-block Carroll Avenue pedestrian crossing at Manor Circle or Lee Avenue. Chief Ricucci said he'd have to look at the location.

Jeff Trunzo mentioned that many people see the traffic signals, for vehicles on Carroll facing the city lot, as too high. Drivers closest to the signals have to look up to see the signals leading to slow reactions, and drivers behind them lean on their horns. Cedric Ward thought there could be a lower signal.