

Recommendations from 7th Street Evaluation Committee

Executive Summary

With a history of speeding and accidents as well as multiple iterations of remediation over the last decade, 7th Street provides an example of the challenges present in calming traffic along a neighborhood street that is classified as an arterial road. The 7th Street Committee was charged with evaluating what worked and what did not work in trying to improve the environment along 7th St. Recommendations are listed below with corridor background, remediation shortcomings, and recommendation details and explanations in the appendix following.

The Transportation Commission recommends that Council provide direction and budget for staff to implement the following recommendations:

1. Collect systematic data for arterial streets, make data-driven recommendations, and pursue street improvements in locations that are likely to have a large impact.
2. Broaden the application of existing quick build/paint-and-post tools to mediate speed on arterial streets.
3. Develop a Major Street Calming initiative.
4. Explore means of local driver education.
5. Explore conceptual level design for All Ages and Abilities bike facility along 7th St. Present design to the community and develop further if there is public support.

Alignments:

Pedestrian Safety and Access Task Force Recommendations to Council, September 2015

A2 Moving Together Toward Vision Zero Transportation Plan DRAFT 2020

Recommendations from 7th Street Evaluation Committee

Appendix A

Goal: Reduce speeding and accidents on 7th Street.

Background: Seventh Street is a major artery that is heavily residential, creating many conflict points and some on-going resident complaints about motor vehicle speeds along the corridor. Several treatments have been implemented in order to reduce speeding and crashes. For example, bike lanes, pedestrian gateway treatments (i.e., yield signs at both ends of the crosswalk and a flexible delineator post or yield sign in between travel lanes), and two speed radar signs. The committee (Julie Boland, Linda Diane Feldt, Seth Peterson) convened with staff (Officer Jamie Adkins, Kayla Coleman, Eli Cooper, Raymond Hess, Nicholas Hutchinson, Cynthia Redinger) to evaluate whether the treatments had been successful, and if not, what else could be done. When examining the available data about motor vehicle speeds post-treatment (see attached), the committee concluded that the problems remained unresolved, despite the remediation efforts. In the attached graphs, each data point summarizes a 2-week time period. The data are incomplete because data must be manually retrieved from the radar signs. Upward trends were noted, with high percentages of speeding cars.

Remediation Shortcomings: Solutions from the initial remediation process (circa 2013) were insufficient to solve the speeding problems on 7th Street because of circular logic related to the traffic volumes and possible treatments for the corridor:

- Installation of more robust traffic calming measures might lead to slower traffic flow and reduced traffic volume.
- Slower traffic flow and reduced traffic volume are the parameters to qualify for installation of many traffic calming measures.

Perhaps traffic engineering practices have evolved since 2013 to allow for more traffic calming measures to be considered on a street with traffic speed and volume comparable to 7th Street, but staff did the best they could at the time within their existing confines. Rules that are developed around state highways work less well in an urban context.

The initial improvements of the speed radar signage have done some good, but they have had limited impact in making lasting changes on 7th Street. Speed Radar signs serve a driver education and enforcement purpose, and have done as much as they can in that regard. The actual driving speed is displayed on the sign, but the notion of “speeding” is subjective. Enforcement has seemingly not been prioritized since the early days after installation and is at best a band-aid that can only be applied in limited locations at limited times (and it is definitely not a feasible solution during a pandemic).

There were issues during the new bike lane installation on 7th because the detailed engineering drawings did not specify the new motor vehicle lanes at a 10 foot width (to which they were being narrowed). The drawings showed bike lanes dimensioned at 5ft. (and the motor vehicle lanes were left undimensioned) with the assumption that the remaining road width would leave 10 foot auto lanes. This was accurate in some areas, but left other wider sections of 7th with auto lanes of 11+ft. Once staff was alerted to this discrepancy, they resolved it, as well as adding the advisory lanes which now exist through the intersections areas of 7th. These have certainly been an improvement in the bikeability of 7th, though have not had a noticeable effect on speeds beyond the initial break-in period of unfamiliarity to drivers.

While 7th Street may be unique in the number of treatments that have been implemented, other arterial streets that are heavily residential (e.g., Miller, Dexter, Liberty) have similar problems.

The Committee proposes the following recommendations, which are in alignment with the objectives presented in the Pedestrian Safety and Access Task Force Recommendations to Council, September 2015.

From Page 21, Objective #5, Primary Recommendation "C":

Implement Arterial and Collector Traffic Management to Encourage Driving Speeds of 30 mph or Less. Measures should be routinely employed on arterial and collector roadways as necessary to minimize the likelihood of death or severe injury to pedestrians crossing the road. Towards that end, all arterial and collector roads that have a posted speed limit greater than 30 mph or where the 85 percentile speed is greater than 30 mph should be evaluated for geometric, signal timing and roadside improvements that have been shown to reduce the speed of motor vehicles. The desired state is to have the 85 percentile speeds and the road designed for travel at 30 mph or less.

Recommendations

The Transportation Commission recommends that Council provide direction and budget for staff to implement the following. Staff has prepared preliminary cost estimates for the implementation of these recommendations (provided below); a funding source must be determined for implementation to move forward.

- 1) **Collect systematic data for arterial streets, make data-driven recommendations, and pursue street improvements in locations that are likely to have a large impact.** A robust data collection program is needed to achieve a complete understanding of how the system is used, including but not limited to: crash data, speed data, volume data, active transportation data, turning movement data. Additional resources and equipment (e.g., permanent data collectors with remote communication ability) are necessary to make traffic data more abundant and accessible. Having such data will be essential for communicating safety needs to the public and for evaluating the success of remediation efforts.
- 2) **Broaden the application of existing quick build/paint-and-post tools to mediate speed on arterial streets.** Evaluate the tools that have been implemented on 7th Street, determine what has been successful, and implement those tools on other arterials, system-wide. Extend the use of existing tools on 7th Street, and other arterials, from seasonal to year-round; specifically, pedestrian gateway treatments and flexible delineators used for buffering in bike lanes. Adjust Public Works operations for winter maintenance, and other city operations, as needed, to extend to year-round use. Seek new opportunities for “Quick Build” or “Paint and Post” treatments that may become available, and consider implementation on 7th Street and other arterials. Consider new opportunities within industry best practices, as well as opportunities realized as a result of robust data collection and analysis. Review any new options in the Comprehensive Transportation Plan for possible implementation on 7th Street and other arterials. These might provide short term solutions or allow us to pilot-test longer-term solutions.
- 3) **Develop a Major Street Calming initiative.** The program should include an overall speed management toolbox, identifying the appropriate tools and physical street modifications for all road classifications. The speed management toolbox should be reviewed during each capital road improvement project and applied whenever feasible, as well as a citizen-request process for speed management review outside of capital improvement projects. The development of a Major Street Traffic Calming Program should build on the guidance and recommendations identified in the A2 Moving Together Toward Vision Zero Transportation Plan.
 - a) This initiative will require funding in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for both development and implementation.
 - b) The existing Traffic Calming Program, for local streets, provides a possible model of citizen-initiated street calming that could be adapted for a Major Street Calming initiative.
 - i) Pro: Things go more smoothly with resident support; we want citizens to be happy with the outcome.
 - ii) Pro: Feedback from residents increases awareness of local concerns that might otherwise not be considered.
 - iii) Con: The traffic calming problem is shifted to other nearby streets (who may then submit their own requests or suffer in silence).
 - iv) Con: This is the squeaky-wheel approach and may result in inequitable solutions.
 - v) Con: The existing local streets Traffic Calming public engagement specifically elevates the feedback from property owners and residents on the individual street. Public engagement

for a major street program may require a more robust, community-wide, public engagement process to gather feedback from other road users, due to the higher traffic volumes for these road classifications.

- c) A more systematic approach, using data-driven decision making, is recommended by Vision Zero guidelines.
 - i) Pro: This approach has the potential to solve/minimize problems city-wide, rather than shifting problems from one street to another.
 - ii) Con: This approach is likely to be met with resistance from residents. Education (and leadership from City Council) would be necessary to justify this approach.
 - iii) Con: Funding is not available to implement changes on all relevant streets simultaneously, so the problem of shifting traffic problems from one major street to another would still be an issue.

- 4) **Explore means of local driver education.** If Ann Arbor is to lead with newer traffic engineering practices, but is limited by state driver education that was often taught decades ago, is there a means of educating at least locally? Mailers? Online course for local tax credit?

- 5) **Explore conceptual level design for All Ages and Abilities bike facility along 7th St. Present design to the community and develop further if there is public support.**
 - a) 7th St. is shown as part of an All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network on page 64 of the A2 Moving Together Toward Vision Zero Transportation Plan
 - b) 7th St. is entirely non-commercial and links along its length to 5 schools and 4 parks. Bicycles are an excellent mode of transportation for school age kids as well as the rest of the community,
 - c) While many efforts have been made to slow traffic along 7th up to this point, the results have been limited
 - d) The 2-way facility on William St., in addition to providing safe bicycle passage for all ages and abilities, has passively calmed the traffic to the extent that it is a much safer and more enjoyable corridor. It has accomplished this without extensive equipment purchases or speed studies. Street maintenance along William has also been successful.
 - e) A successful project along 7th could provide a template for solutions on similar corridors such as Miller, Liberty, and Platt.