

Remarks to the City of Ann Arbor Transportation Commission

April 17, 2019

by Clark Charnetski

My remarks tonight concern the proposal to amend Ann Arbor's crosswalk ordinance. That change would require pedestrians wishing to cross a street or roadway to place themselves at risk in order to have drivers yield to them at unsignalized crosswalks, including those with flashing yellow lights.

I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Local Advisory Council of the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, representing the Area Agency on Ageing. The Local Advisory Council advises the Board of Directors on matters concerning services for seniors and passengers with disabilities. We discussed the proposed changes in the crosswalk ordinance at our monthly meeting last week.

We were not able to vote for a recommendation on this proposal because of concerns for separation of public bodies. However, during our discussion NO member of the council thought that the proposed change was a good idea. They expressed fear over the requirement that they place their bodies or their wheelchairs into the roadway rather than at the curb or crosswalk ramp in order to have drivers yield to them. Some indicated that they would not try to cross streets if this change were made.

In 2017 the City of Ann Arbor contracted with the Toole Design Group to provide an independent engineering review of Ann Arbor's crosswalk ordinance. The memorandum regarding this review dated November 13, 2017 is in your meeting packet.

Hannah Pritchard certified Professional Traffic Operations Engineer, with 11 years of traffic engineering experience summarized her organization's review:

“Given the disparity in size and inertia between pedestrians and motor vehicles, expecting the pedestrian to fully enter the roadway before drivers are required to yield would put pedestrians at unnecessary risk. By defining driver yielding requirements at crosswalks in a clear and explicit manner that allows pedestrians to safely make use of their right-of-way, Ann Arbor's crosswalk ordinance provides a reasonable contribution toward Ann Arbor's efforts to advance walkability and pedestrian safety.”

Ann Arbor has more pedestrians than most cities in Michigan, so it is reasonable to expect the City to fine tune its traffic ordinances to meet its responsibilities. Those who are concerned that the state rule is different from that in Ann Arbor should work to change the state rule to be like that in Ann Arbor, which is better for both pedestrians and drivers.

Addendum:

From the procurement process:

TDG proposes Hannah Pritchard, PE, PTOE to review Section 10:148 of the City Code as well as relevant local resolutions, ordinances and state laws. Hannah is a registered Professional Engineer in Michigan and Minnesota and a certified Professional Traffic Operations Engineer. She has 11 years of traffic engineering experience, including seven performed in Michigan. Hannah's review will be supported by TDG vice president, Bill Schultheiss, PE. Bill Schultheiss has over 17 years of experience in bicycle and pedestrian planning and design, and serves as an expert consultant on bicycle and pedestrian projects throughout the United States. Bill is a registered Professional Engineer in 20 states, including Michigan.