

Healthy Streets Committee Meeting notes – Molly Kleinman

Thursday, September 2, 2021

Attendees: Molly Kleinman, Bret Hautamaki, Rachel Francisco, Councilmember Briggs, Raymond Hess, Kayla Coleman

June 23rd Council approved the contract w/ PK

Can be onerous, A2 has strict requirements

My COI, Certificate of Insurance, 3rd party system to make sure contractor has all the appropriate coverage.

Started that process right after approval, had been making good progress

Were very close when the contractor was acquired by another company, threw the whole contracting process into a tailspin, because they had to start over to get the new parent company into the system. Painful. PK Was already under contract w/ other jobs in the city, but still had to start over for healthy streets. Took a month and a half.

Timing couldn't have been worse. Installation happened right at move in weekend, AAPS schools starting up. All of which is a week earlier than usual. School a week early, deployment super late, perfect storm. And it's exactly what happened last year.

HS seems to be cursed. No matter how often we try to get ahead of the curve on some of this stuff, these unforeseen circumstances occur and push us behind.

Take HS out of the mix, move-in is chaotic and jammed.

No sign that it has caused more traffic or backups, but are looking at signal adjustments on Main. Outside of peak hours Main is operating just fine.

PK was in town last weekend and did S. Main, did it really fast. Then were going to move on to Packard. Neighborhood Slow Streets have been paused. They were planning to deploy this past weekend, but w/ the start of the school year and the chaos of getting back to it after two years, thought it would be good to let those first couple days of school happen before rolling out NSS. Starting to go up now.

Other complications: 7th St water main break, further detours. Created more cut through traffic on local streets. Some NSS will address that. 7th is now open, will hopefully relieve some pressure off Main.

Main St. delineators are on backorder. Looking at other options, including city materials on hand. May switch materials to something more readily available. Had planned to use Quick Curb.

Packard has been repaved but not restriped yet. Had planned to just do bike lanes, but decided to do whole block since it was so bad. Basically same price to do whole road. Restriping will happen in new configuration. Will be permanent.

Operators concerned about transit not getting through the Packard/Hill intersection w/o the turn lanes.

Q: Is signal priority an option yet? A: Signal priority not an option yet. The Ride got a grant from the state to implement signal priority. Design was not meant to be a vehicle to infrastructure direct interaction. Plan had been meant to be more backend. Automatic Vehicle Locators would communicate

w/ the central system, which would then send signals back to the signals themselves. Concerned about the latency of that system. Needs to work w/in seconds.

Eventually we'll do it, will test likely on Plymouth because it's one of the busier transit routes that the city controls.

Another problem is if queues are too long and there's no lane for buses to jump ahead to get to the light. Or if buses are too far back, or turning cars are yielding to pedestrians, holding the green might not help.

Q: Have you been looking at what's happening on Main w/ transit. A: Yes. Will be meeting with TheRide to discuss Main issues. There's a park and ride lot down at Pioneer, they may be missing their time marks right when school is starting. May be able to give extra green time at Main and Stadium to help clear the queue.

One thing they're observing is they drop the bike lane at about Snyder, to get increased intersection capacity. But observing that cars aren't using that second lane on Snyder. More treating it like a turn lane. If they do start using it, may help clear the intersection faster. Intersections are the choke points.

Q: Pioneer traffic seems to be causing problems. Also an issue at Huron. A: Looking at adjusting signal timings.

We often forget what things were like before the pandemic. What do we compare today to? Last week? A year ago? Two years ago? If we compare today to two years ago, what we're seeing is pretty similar. Huron always had congestion, exacerbated by hospital traffic. Comparing to pandemic conditions is not a reasonable comparison. Way fewer cars on the road. Now a lot of that traffic is back.

People say "Healthy Streets" did this, but no, there is always traffic around Pioneer and Huron. But it does dissipate quickly.

Q: What are the plans for evaluation? A: Traffic counts. Both in terms of cars and bike/ped. Before and after volumes. Travel time runs, to see how long it takes, how many light cycles to get through intersection during am/pm peak, compare to historical understanding. One thing we don't have programmed, which we did last year, is we are not anticipating any sort of post-implementation survey. Tracking emails getting in and responses sending out. May be able to capture some of the chatter on next door and FB. Last year because everything was a pilot, with the DDA we put out before and after surveys, and provided that as part of our technical report.

Reason why they haven't decided to do post implementation survey is 1) Packard is permanent, Main and neighborhoods are temp, but haven't been planning on it.

Concern: Emails tend to come from angry people, might be unbalanced and inaccurate relative to survey.

Briggs: Main concern is about impact on transit. Data. Crashes. Other roadways that didn't get these configurations that we might compare to Main.

Neighborhood slow streets & main would be restored in mid-November. Plan is to observe how Main operates on game day. Anticipate that it will not be an issue, Main is down to 1 lane a little to the north anyway.

Observation: NSS demonstrate latent demand for traffic calming in neighborhood streets.

A lot of the neighborhood slow streets are streets that came into the previous calming program and were rejected. We since made it easier to get into the program, now there are more than we can process. Don't have enough funds. TC wants to raise the budget, hard to come up w/ a number. But traffic calming is a very labor intensive exercise for staff. Requires a host of meetings. e.g. Ability to process 12 programs a year is not tenable. We would have to stop everything else and would come at the cost of other things we do as a team.

Looking ahead: No more Healthy Streets. Permanent solutions instead, quick build solutions, implementation of the transportation plan. RFP just closed for consultant to help w/ implementation plan. Part of that is major streets traffic calming program.

Maybe a temporary or interim traffic calming approach. e.g. Rubber speed humps you can just throw on the ground. Reason haven't started yet: 1) Think they have to be pulled up for winter. Starts to create an issue where you have to deploy stuff and then pull it up over the winter and residents don't experience the benefit for half the year. Limits the efficacy of that deployment, and costs a lot of labor hours. 2) IF temp solution leads to permanent solution, people are very particular about their vertical devices. If temp solution is different from permanent one, lots of consternation arises. Don't like different.

When can we start thinking beyond speed bumps for neighborhood issues? Diverters, bump outs, etc. Northside is interesting because it already has traffic calming, from the data it looks like it's working, 85th percentile speed is at 18 mph, but they still experience a lot of cut through traffic. Have talked about limiting turning movements. Mention it in the neighborhood, people really want to be able to make all those turns. Things that are left, curb extensions, bump outs, turning restrictions.

Also talking about diverters on Washington as part of the bicycle boulevard system. Without removing street parking, the thing that would make the most sense is traffic diverters that would force cars to turn, but minimize throughput on that street. But will be resisted. YMCA, major corridor into campus.

Briggs: We're not going to be able to get through all the changes we need to make with our current system if it's so labor intensive. To more uniformly implement a slow streets program. Maybe don't call it neighborhood streets, people who live on arterials get offended, they live in neighborhoods, too. Will have to get more creative about persistent cut through issues, high speeds on side streets.

A lot of these programs are decentralized by design, petition driven. Residential parking permit, traffic calming. Even some of the nasty comments I get on neighborhood slow streets are about why do the residents get to make this decision, when I need to drive through there. People complaining about something being cut off to traffic, they're the problem. Not always about quantity, it's about quality. If we flip that on its head, that would be a significant departure of how we normally do things. I already have a lot of targets on my back, but I would foresee an uprising if we come in and say, Oh by the way we're doing this to your local street because it's part of a community wide effort to slow down traffic. W/o the intensive public hand holding to come up w/ the desired solution, can see a lot of it blowing up in our faces.

Would love to empower neighborhoods to do things on their own. Amongst themselves come to consensus on what they want to do. Street murals have come up a lot, visual calming device w/o vertical devices. Legal department has been concerned, if you allow you have to allow for everyone. But other municipalities have handled this w/ guidelines like, "no recognizable symbols or language". That's a great fit. If the neighborhood really wants to do something, and do it now, great, we'll sweep the street for you, close it up, and you can do the paving now. Maybe there can be a design for planters in the street, crashworthiness an issue but might be possible.

So many times we get complaints, direction that the city needs to fix it, we try to make everyone happy and make no one happy. It's already decentralized, could decentralize even further and let neighborhoods do this, too. Could still go through traffic calming. 3D seeming crosswalks? MUTCD rules say no on crosswalks.

On S. Main, looking to have a decision to make it permanent, if the data suggests it's working as intended. Hope is that if it's working we can just leave it. Cost to the contractor would be fairly nominal if not cheaper to make the new treatment permanent than to take it out. May be able to do it w/o going back to Council.

Questions for the committee:

1. Talking about data collection. We have baseline data, will do another round during deployment. If there are any other pieces of data that are worth collecting, what are they?
 1. Can we do some demographic data collection for who lives along these corridors? Communicate numbers of children, ppl w/ disabilities? Have had mixed success with that in the past. Would have to use Census data, but not always that detailed. But can try to drill down as low as we can.
 2. Along Main, curious about crosswalk compliance data. Those crosswalks probably need enhancements, but wondering whether it's already better.
 3. Issues w/ the bike lane by the Yard w/ people parking in it. Additional signage? Delineators will help once they're up.
 4. If traffic counts on S. Main are 30,000 cars, we won't recommend we keep it. Recommended volumes are 20,000, which Main has always been on the cusp.

Suggestion: Comms plan and strategy, and response plan and strategy, for managing message and responding to nonsense on social media. Comms team generally tries to stay out of social media debate.

More questions about the survey idea: On the one hand, no need for another survey, on the other, helps to get some positive comments.

One thing that Missy has done incredibly well is mobilized Missy's army, network of people that she can activate on carbon neutrality initiatives. Transportation department doesn't do that. Have a listserv of the usual players. Looking for ambassadors, not just Healthy Streets, but transportation improvements in general. People like that would be really good.

Learned at a conference, Portland totally changed their public engagement. Hired a bunch of laid off reporters, asked them to write narratives and storytelling around projects to help people understand

the projects better, give it a personal take. Interviewed people, what is your experience getting to work now? Interview again after improvements, hear the changes. Made things more relatable. Help identify some ambassadors. Not just hardcore bike/ped advocates. Those people often get dismissed. Need to broaden the narrative, get new players to the table. Fresh faces that don't have alliances or allegiances would be really helpful. Will be part of the implementation strategy.

Vision: Come up w/ a sound technical solution. Then we come up w/ a better way to communicate what that solution brings. Storytelling approach or something else. Address vision zero and transportation plan, doing quick build, and doing a much better job communicating the project than