

Transportation Commission Statement to City Council on the Subject of Road Reconfigurations at Earhart, Traverwood, and Green Roads

July 2019 – Commissioners shared the below comments at the July 17, 2019 Transportation Commission meeting, and approved a motion to provide these comments to City Council to accompany their support for the road reconfiguration resolutions.

The Transportation Commission wishes to achieve a safe transportation network for all users and consequently supports the reconfigurations on Earhart, Traverwood, and Green Roads. The Transportation Commission reviewed these projects at three different meetings, and concurs with staff's recommendation that the projects will achieve the desired outcomes to improve safety and multimodal access.

There has been much discussion about the value and importance of public engagement. Public comment is a very important input for transportation projects and we are happy to see improvements in engagement techniques by the City. However, engagement is just one input among many important considerations as to whether or not these projects should advance. Public comment is not a reliable, scientific, or statistically significant method of understanding public opinion. As such, it must be considered alongside policy objectives, evidence, and expertise when determining how best to configure roads with the needs of all users in mind.

Several Transportation Commission members reviewed all public comments on the three proposed reconfigurations. We made the following observations:

- The majority of commenters were in favor of all three changes.
- Focusing specifically on in-person engagement from members of the affected communities, the support for these changes is overwhelming. People in these neighborhoods want safer streets, and they want these reconfigurations.
- Opposition to these changes often appeared to be based on faulty premises, such as a misunderstanding or a lack of information. For example, on the Earhart Road proposal, several commenters were neutral or negative on the lane reconfiguration, but explicitly requested a speed reduction and suggested a reduced speed limit and/or more enforcement. This reflects a lack of understanding about the effectiveness of road diets to reduce speeds and increase safety for all road users, without the burden of additional enforcement. Other commenters opposed the perceived expense of these changes, but the city has actually taken an efficient approach, and planned reconfigurations on roads that are already scheduled for repaving and repainting.

According to these public comments, it is clear that the public strongly desires reduced speeds and safer crossings at all three of the locations under consideration. The data show, both from Ann Arbor and in comparable cities around the country, that these road reconfigurations will reduce crashes and increase safety and mobility for all road users. The Transportation Commission again recommends that these proposed improvements be adopted.
