



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC WORKS INFRASTRUCTURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: February 15, 2021

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Location: This meeting was entirely virtual via Zoom.

Committee members present: Council members Tony Emerson, Neil Dobler and Michael Lesser

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, Finance: Jessica Lamendola, Stephen Wade, Adam Vaughn, Josh McAnarney; Legal: Lisa Robertson, Mary Feighny; Planning: Bill Fiander, Taylor Wolfe Public Works/Engineering: Brian Faust, Hannah Uhlig, Jaci Vogel, Robert Bidwell, Jehan Zeb, Tony Trower, Brian Bigenwalt, Michelle Neiswender, Dee McElwee-Vazquez, Jason Tryon, Mark Price; Utilities: Bob Sample, Braxton Copley, Sylvia Davis; SGT Kerry Connell (TPD)

Call to Order

Chairman Dobler called the meeting to order at 2:00pm.

Elect 2021 Chair

Committee member Emerson nominated Committee member Dobler to serve as the Chair for the 2021 term. Committee member Dobler accepted. Committee member Lesser seconded the motion. Motion passed 3:0.

Approve Minutes from January 25, 2021 meeting

Committee member Lesser made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Emerson seconded the motion. Motion passes 3:0.

Traffic Signal Update [Time 1:40 minute mark]

{All presentations and supplemental materials reviewed at this meeting can be found on the Committee's webpage at: <https://www.topeka.org/citycouncil/public-infrastructure/> }

Kristi Ericksen, Traffic Engineer, provided the committee with a presentation regarding the traffic signals in the city of Topeka.

Highlights from the presentation include:

- There are 186 signalized intersections.
- Structures are designed to last 40 years, however technology, conduits and wiring are not lasting that long.

- Given the number of signalized intersections, best practice would be to replace 5 annually. Current program budget allows for 3 signal lights to be replaced annually.
- ADA improvements have been made along with other enhanced technology, which has increased the cost for replacement.
- Asking for consideration to discuss removing signals. This would reduce some of the financial cost for maintenance and replacements.
- Additional ways to handle intersection traffic might include medians, roundabouts, replace full signal with pedestrian crossing and flashing lights.
- Considerations made with how to handle intersections include: traffic and pedestrian capacity, costs of conducting signal warrant analyses and costs of maintenance, safety, traffic flow changes and costs for upgrading signal capabilities, and capacity for future projects to make changes.
- The 2021 Signal Replacement Program includes replacing signals at 10th & Washburn/10th & Lane, and 21st & Randolph, and to begin the study for 9th & Quincy, 7th & Jackson, 5th & Jackson, 4th & Jackson, and Huntoon & Tyler. After completion of the studies, suggestions may be made to remove some of the signals in the Downtown area, and replacing those intersections with other traffic flow designs.

Questions from the Committee:

- Average cost has increased because of ADA things. Is that something we have to do for every intersection? Yes. The ADA requirements must be at every intersection. Some intersections have already been configured to meet the requirement, however most have not.
- Is there anything proprietary that is driving up the cost? Is there anything we could do as an “at equal” to help get some savings? Yes, but it does not have an impact on the cost. We standardize the controllers and conflict monitors, which is about \$5,000. By doing this, signals are able to be tied into a central system which allows for one location to control all of them. This also helps with staff performing maintenance and saves money.
- If an intersection does not have a signal, a study is done to decide whether or not it needs one. What is the process for removing a signal? Check the warrants to see if the need meets the current signal. If not, the process could continue to decide which other type of traffic configuration could handle the current traffic.
- Do you have an estimate on how many signals we can eliminate? Politically it is not going to be a popular thing, however there is a possibility to remove 15 signals over the course of a few years.
- Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about street sign presentation. She receives a lot of calls and questions about the lack of and need for stop signs in the Oakland neighborhood, especially. Cars are traveling certain streets at a

high rate of speed, and parents are not letting their children ride their bikes. Chairman Dobler stated he could add a sign presentation to the next agenda. Ms. Ericksen asked a clarifying question: Would you like for me to speak to the topics of speed of vehicles in neighborhoods as well as controlled versus uncontrolled intersections, and use Oakland as an example? Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá confirmed.

Committee member Lesser stated he had received phone calls about drivers who utilize detours as race tracks, and do not appear to adhere to safe speeds. He contacted Chief Cochran who quickly sent traffic enforcement officers over to the area to address the issue.

Chairman Dobler suggested having information regarding enforcement as part of the topics as well.

- Several years ago, the signals were synched together along 21st and Wanamaker. Do we still do that? Yes. The in-sync system runs from 10th and Wanamaker to 21st and Wanamaker to 21st and Fairlawn. Timings were updated in August of 2019.
- Committee member Lesser noticed the light at 12th and Kansas seems to be very slow. Is this due to older signals? Yes. It was fixed several weeks ago. Intersections that are not part of the in-synch system are either coordinated by hand or are on a fixed-timer system. An adaptive system, such as the N-6, will allow for the timing to be managed more efficiently and can be adapted as traffic needs arise.
- Chairman Dobler thanked the traffic engineering division, noting that they are a small group of staff who manage a lot of tasks.

Utility Coordination Update [video 25:50 minute mark]

Robert Bidwell, Pavement Improvement Manager, provided an update on the Utility coordination efforts that are used to help minimize project delays associated with unanticipated utility conflicts. [*The presentation will be made available on the committee's webpage.*]

The City hosts a monthly coordination meeting that includes various utility companies (both private and City-owned) will meet with the City consultants to see what the project looks like and how to navigate around existing utilities.

During preliminary design, the consultant identifies potential conflicts of utilities.

Following field check, the consultant will send each company a list of what was found, the utility companies will confirm the locations of their utilities.

A meeting is called with all utility companies that were identified as having property within the scope of the plan to discuss potential conflicts, and propose relocations, as well as to work on a relocation timeframe. Ideally, the relocation can occur prior to the project beginning, however it is sometimes safer to perform the relocation during the project process.

Mr. Bidwell showed a slide that discussed the Subsurface Utility Engineering (SUE) and levels of quality.

Questions from the Committee:

- Practice was put into place for a 3 year program to include 1st year design, 2nd year utility coordination, and 3rd year the project would go to Bid. Can you tell me if that process has been working and if it is still taking place now that the Public Works Director has left? Mr. Bidwell responded the three year time frame program was followed for the 12th street project, and seemed to work fairly well. For the major reconstruction projects, having the additional time for utilities to be moved seems to be good practice. For smaller projects, a full year may not be necessary, however allowing some time for movement is a good idea.
- Do we have a policy to check the work once completed with regard to private utility work? Mr. Bidwell stated he was not sure how much notification the City receives for work done by private utilities, however it was something that has increased. Brian Faust, City Engineer, stated there has recently been some changes to staff duties to include someone who provides the oversight on completed work done by private companies.
- Are excavation permits required before work begins? Yes. There have been cases where companies forget to get the permit before beginning a project.
- What is the participation for other utilities in attending the monthly coordination meetings? Good turnout.

2021 Project Update [Video 49:00 minute mark]

Brian Faust, City Engineer, provided a list of updates on current projects. [*This information can be found on the committee's webpage.*]

Highlights:

List of street projects that will be beginning in Spring 2021.

Number of programs for 2021, such as 50/50 sidewalk and ADA ramp programs have been approved and will be beginning.

Questions from the Committee:

- There was recently an RFP for street sweeping. Can you give an update on if any proposals were received? Tony Trower, interim deputy director for Public Works, stated three proposals were received. He is putting numbers together currently

to compare the cost for the City to complete the work in-house versus contracting it out.

- Has the decision been made to contract out the street sweeping? No, bids were solicited to gather information to compare within the budget.
- Will this be something presented to the PWI committee once the bids have been analyzed? City Manager Brent Trout noted the decision may not be something that would be determined by the committee, however, an update once the information has been reviewed can be provided. He clarified that there have been some issues to work through regarding pricing. There will not be any elimination of positions or equipment, this is to supplement the City's current staff and equipment. A decision has not been made.
- When we talk about street sweeping, does that include bridges? Yes.

Items from Staff [video 1:00:25 minute mark]

Mr. Faust stated staff is seeking input from the committee regarding future topics of interest.

Presentation on bridge inventory, and asset management are planned for March.

Notes from committee: traffic signs and speed limits, vehicle leasing update - Hannah Uhrig, Deputy Director for Public Works, confirmed she would be able to bring this item in March. Chairman Dobler felt these topics would be enough for the March meeting.

Chairman Dobler expressed interest in hearing about the parking garages and rates at the April or May meeting.

Items from Committee [video 1:03:30 minute mark]

Committee member Lesser stated he received information regarding a sewer failure in a right-of-way. This is not an uncommon occurrence, and he appreciated the quick response by staff to address the matter. A letter was sent to the property owner stating due dates to contact a plumber and another to get the matter fixed. He understands that the idea is to encourage property owners to address the matter as quick as possible, however suggested changing the language of the letter. He suggested something along the lines of contacting the City within five days with a plan to fix the issue. Chairman Dobler stated he had heard similar comments, and perhaps hearing from staff about the notification process would be helpful. City Manager Trout noted there may be some modification regarding the language in the notifications. He will review this and give an update in March.

Councilwoman Valdivia-Alcalá inquired with Committee member Lesser with regard to some of the information found on the letter. She agreed that revising the language would be of interest.

Committee member Emerson would also like to see the utility letter revised. He thanked the road crews during the snow and cold weather in recent days.

Other Items

City Manager Trout mentioned the water maintenance crews have been working incredibly hard in the minus degree weather as we have had a number of water main breaks. Chairman Dobler echoed the appreciation for that work.

Adjourn

The next meeting will be held on March 16th at 2:00pm. Additional details will be made available on the committee's webpage and the City's Public Meeting Calendar, once known.

Chairman Dobler adjourned the meeting at 3:20pm.

Video of the meeting can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/X29XWDDskSM>