

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT
July 7, 2010, 8:15 AM
City Council Chambers

Members Present: Jason Wiener (chair), Ed Childers, Lyn Hellegaard, Roy Houseman, Dave Strohmaier, Pam Walzer

Members Absent: Dick Haines, Bob Jaffe, Marilyn Marler, Renee Mitchell, Jon Wilkins

Others Present: Phil Smith, Steve King, Kevin Slovarp

I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

- A. Approval of the minutes of June 30, 2010— forthcoming
- B. Announcements –
- C. Public Comment on Non-Agenda items –

II. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

1. Interlocal Agreement between the City of Missoula and the County of Missoula related to the Reserve Street / Mullan Road Intersection Improvements Project (memo) (MDT Presentation).—Regular Agenda (Gregg Wood)
(Referred to committee: 01/11/10) REMOVE FROM AGENDA

Motion: The committee recommends the City Council approve and authorize the Mayor to sign the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Missoula and the County of Missoula related to the Reserve Street / Mullan Road Intersection Improvements project and adopt a resolution authorizing the Mayor to sign future agreements for the intersection.

Steve King, Public Works Director, stated that an updated version of the interlocal agreement was received and attached to the packet yesterday, and that the County Commissioners would be discussing at their meeting this afternoon. The attachment in the packet that shows the proposed crossing distances will be labeled as Exhibit A in the agreement. The resolution is to allow them to go toward the contracting process as quickly as possible. They will be changing the intersection dual left-turn lanes northbound on Reserve and two lanes westbound on Mullan to Clark Fork Lane. The resolution mentions the interlocal agreement and states that it is the intention to allow the mayor to enter into contracts. The project authorization ceiling in the resolution is consistent with the money available for the project.

Mr. Wiener stated that some questions they had wanted addressed previously were whether they could designate the inside turn lane as the only one for trucks and updated traffic projections.

Ms. Walzer asked if pedestrians were expected to cross the entire distance on Reserve Street instead of stopping at the islands with the current configuration. The islands have their own pedestrian signals. Mr. King stated that in the current configuration, pedestrians are expected to stop on the island and wait. He stated that the existing island in the southeast corner will remain and pedestrians will not be expected to wait.

Mr. Wiener stated that they had presented a compelling case to provide a protected left-hand turn for traffic. He was trying to decide whether the trade-off was worth it.

Mr. Strohmaier stated that \$300,000 was available, which was not enough to accomplish everything at the intersection. The additions to the trail system that had been mentioned were a great idea but were not available with these funds. He asked about pedestrian conflicts at the intersection and major vehicular accidents, especially as linked to the current configuration. Mr. King stated that the primary issue of the project is overall safety at the intersection. During the study period of 2003 to 2005, there were 89 rear-end crashes and 21 northbound left-turn crashes. The rear-end crashes are in some ways associated with vehicle stacking. The proposed changes should reduce left-turning crashes and rear-end crashes. During that same period, there were two reported pedestrian accidents. They will be adding countdown timers and increased crossing time for pedestrians. The configuration to protected left turns should significantly improve overall intersection safety. Adding a protected left turn is the standard response to left-turn accidents.

Mr. Strohmaier stated that he was marginally supportive of the project. He asked what the outcome would be if Council failed to approve the interlocal agreement or the resolution and if the project would move forward. Mr. King stated that if the City did not agree, the County and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) would have the option to go forward without City input.

Mr. Slovarp stated that a document containing queue lengths and vehicle delays had been sent to Council. It shows the delay times for vehicles at the intersection in the current and in the proposed configurations.

Mr. Wiener asked if restricting large trucks to the inner turn lane only would negate the need to remove the island. Mr. King stated they had talked about that restriction with MDT and they looked at turning templates and at how trucks move through, but having another vehicle outside the semi would still impact the island. The island would be truncated substantially and it would not be approvable by MDT because there is not enough room for pedestrians, ADA requirements, and the pedestrian signal buttons on the island area. The island would still need to go. They could sign it and require trucks to be on the inside, but occasionally the wrong vehicle would be in the wrong lane and be stuck at the intersection trying to make that turn.

Mr. Childers stated that his concern is the distance the pedestrian has to walk from curb to curb. He asked how wide the crossing distance was at Brooks from curb to curb and how much difficulty they had there with pedestrians and bikes compared to Mullan and Reserve. He said he did not have a problem with the distance from curb to curb. His concern was what would happen on Mullan Road after vehicles turned west. Mr. King stated the changes would reduce high-speed T-bone accidents. There will be a weave motion at Mullan and Clark Fork Lane and there may be some weave collisions, but they will be at lower speeds and will be less severe accidents. There is a good balance of vehicles turning at Wal-Mart versus continuing on. Serious accidents at the intersection will be reduced.

Mr. Childers asked when Mullan Road would be two lanes west of Clark Fork Lane. Mr. King stated it was in the long-range transportation plan but was currently unfunded. Mr. Childers asked about the bicycle escape and what would happen to bicyclists once the sidewalk ended. Mr. King stated that there would be a bike commuter inlay plus a jump out onto the sidewalk. West of Clark Fork Lane there will be no changes. There will be markings for bikes as well as signage to identify the bike ramp onto the sidewalk.

Mr. Houseman stated that this was a short-term fix for a problem that will keep going, and that he would rather be a part of the process than not.

Mr. Wiener made the motion to approve the resolution and the interlocal agreement.

Mr. Wiener stated that they were the deciding the issues of whether the City would be involved now and that it was appropriate to take all the action needed now to move it along.

Ms. Walzer stated they were incrementally approving some things and she hoped they were not making it worse. She wants to stay involved and get the best they can get out of the intersection change.

Bob Giordano of the Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transportation stated they were likely going to make the intersection worse for people walking and on bikes. The sight distances with dual left-turn lanes can be troublesome. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines stated that double-left turn lanes have no potential benefits for multi-modal and create potential problems due to the longer crossing distances. At 153 feet, the crossing at Brooks Street and Reserve is the longest crossing in town. This intersection crossing would be the second longest at 123 feet. At South Avenue, all the crossings are over 100 feet long and they routinely have severe crashes for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. At Reserve and 3rd there are a couple of crossings over 100 feet long. The highest crash frequency and severity are at Reserve and 3rd, South, and Mullan. There are other ways to fix the intersection that don't worsen safety.

Ms. Hellegaard stated that the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) had been struggling with the intersection for two years and she estimated MDT had redesigned it upwards of five or eight times. They have looked at it every way they can to keep the island in the street and there was no way to do it. She will support the motions.

The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Wiener requested the item appear on committee reports.

III. HELD AND ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS

1. Discussion on the sizes of grease interceptors for the restaurant industry ([Grease Interceptor PowerPoint](#)) ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Stacy Rye and Bob Jaffe) (Referred to committee: 04/21/08)
2. Consider restructuring the city's Sewer Loan Program along the lines of the recently approved change to the Sidewalk & Curb Loan Fund.—Regular Agenda ([Chapter 3.16 – Sidewalk & Curb Loan](#)) ([Chapter 3.18 Sewer Loan](#)) ([Ordinance 3344](#)) (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 06/26/06)
3. Review infrastructure conditions at the locations of serious and fatal traffic accidents: 2007-2009 ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Jason Wiener) (Referred to committee: 01/25/10)
4. Resolution to restore vacated Inez Street at South 2nd Street to the public trust and public use, and vacate a public access easement that was a condition of the vacation ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Carla Krause) (Referred to committee: 04/26/2010)
5. Authorize a crosswalk at Central and Stephens ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Jon Wilkins) (Referred to committee: 06/21/10)

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica S. Miller
Office Manager
City Public Works Department