

## **TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION**

January 27, 2020

A meeting of the Committee on Traffic and Transportation was held this date beginning at 1:53 p.m., at City Hall, 80 Broad Street, First Floor Conference Room

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

### **PRESENT**

Councilmember Seekings, Chair; Councilmember Brady, Councilwoman Jackson, and Councilwoman Delcioppo **Present:** Robbie Somerville, Keith Benjamin, Troy Mitchell and Bethany Whitaker, Council Secretary

The meeting was opened with an invocation provided by Councilwoman Jackson.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

On the motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Seekings, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2019 meeting.

### **Introduction to Charleston County Transportation Development Staff (Information Only)**

Mr. Benjamin stated that they weren't able to be at the meeting. They had committed to doing a full presentation at the first meeting in February.

### **Traffic Signal Maintenance Agreement Update**

Mr. Benjamin stated that they thought it was important for Troy, who ran the City signals and had been since after Hurricane Hugo, to give an idea of what was going on in the signals side. Everyone talked about how the City didn't own all of the roads, but the City had the responsibility to operate and maintain most of the signals in the City. They received a payment from the SCDOT to do those specific things.

Mr. Mitchell stated that he oversaw Signal Systems and Operations. There were over 200 signals, not including school flashers and intersection flashers. They were able to do projects through the funding they received from SCDOT. He had seen three generations of the traffic signal system. He would cover some of the projects that they had planned for 2020. The contract with SCDOT was normally about five years with a renewal every year. It came to City Council every year and sometimes they would lose intersections, and other years they would gain intersections. There were duties that the City held that other municipalities did not such as engineering, construction, and signal timings. On the list he had given, the DOT projects were listed first. Normally, they would handle the construction part and most of the funding, and the City would sometimes assist by doing signal plans or working in conjunction regarding newer projects. The first was the Folly at Formosa Signal Rebuild. That was a project where they had gotten with DOT about the concerns regarding the operations of the signals. The City would provide the signal plans, but DOT would provide all funding to do the construction. The City wanted to put in mast arms, but SCDOT didn't do mast arms. That would be an additional cost that the City would have to incur.

Chairman Seekings said that the mast arms were expensive, normally around \$120,000. Mr. Mitchell said it depended on how big the intersection was. Mr. Benjamin said that the ones for Folly/Formosa would be about \$50,000 in total.

Mr. Mitchell continued and said that one of the issues that was brought to their attention was that one of the left turn operations was protected only, and when traffic was not heavy, drivers still had to sit and wait. That was something they were looking at to see if they could do a flashing yellow arrow. The I-526 Intersection Improvement Project was part of one of the DOT projects that included building up I-526. They would be upgrading locations and intersections along Glenn McConnell, Ashley River Road, and Bees Ferry Road all the way to Wesley with flashing yellow areas. All of the improvements had already been made in the Ashley River Road area. They had started on the Hwy. 17 improvements which should be done by September. Then, they would be going back to Ashley River Road to try to implement the traffic response system. All funding and drawings had been done by SCDOT.

Mr. Mitchell continued and said the Pedestrian Improvements Project was a joint project between the City, and DOT. It was part of a larger project that DOT was doing regarding the 700 pedestrian locations they were doing throughout the State. The City helped by doing the designs for nine different locations on the Peninsula. SCDOT would handle the others that were on Hwy 61 and Hwy 17.

Mr. Benjamin stated that Councilwoman Jackson had asked a question. They found out through the multi-jurisdictional meetings that there was leftover money in the maintenance and so the SCDOT had come and asked what intersections within the City didn't have the basics of ADA compliance and pedestrian signals. The City would pay for the signal plans. Mr. Mitchell stated that there were four additional locations being worked on for pedestrian improvements including King/Huger, King/Romney, Meeting/Woolfe.

Mr. Mitchell continued and said the next page was City projects through SMA funds. These were projects that the City was doing itself through the DOT funds. The first was the intersection improvement upgrades where they had gotten requests to look at locations that had protected left turns and try to get them upgraded to flashing yellow arrows. That would include Hwy. 17/Farmfield and Lockwood Drive/Calhoun. They would have to do the studies first and then turn it into SCDOT. A large project for pedestrian safety was Meeting Street at Brigade Street. It was an intersection improvement project. Mr. Benjamin stated that he would be doing a formal presentation on this project, but the City was taking advantage of both the County and the State's resurfacing efforts when there was a chance to redictate what the public right of way looked like and they could make it better. DOT would be helping them introduce the first protected bike lane in the City's history. The City would pay for the improvements. They had gone to the neighborhood and gotten the neighborhood on board. They were just trying to finalize the plans and line it up with the DOT's plans for resurfacing in late summer.

Mr. Mitchell said that with all the changes they had seen in transportation issues, specifically with traffic signals, cyber security had become a big issue. One of the small projects they had was securing a hubcap that the fiber network would work through. That was something they needed to do quickly. The City was having issues with computers currently, so they wanted to make sure the infrastructure was protected. Councilwoman Jackson asked what the cost would be. Mr. Mitchell said they had three hubcaps that had to be secured. The last pricing he got was about \$10,000 for all three. There would be electronic keys that would be programmable, scan cards so that technicians could get into them. Mr. Benjamin stated that with upgrading the traffic management system, it opened the door for all different signalization efforts that they could do. There was a study done in 2007 that looked at all Pedestrian phases at intersections. That meant that in a certain phase, pedestrians from all directions, including diagonally, would be able to move. Calhoun Street would be a good example for this. They couldn't do that right now, because it was copper wiring, so

when they changed that to fiber it could occur. No intersection south of Line Street had been retimed in almost a decade.

Mr. Mitchell stated that the school zone automation project was taking all of the data and have it run through the traffic management system. That would automate when the flashing came on and turned off, rather than having a school officer turn it off and on. It would also alert the system for speeding. The next project was for connected vehicles. Connected vehicles were coming whether they tested it or not. It would be installed along the Crosstown and should be done by the end of March. It would allow the traffic signals to talk to any smart device. The next project was the Island Park Drive at Fairchild Street Intersection Improvements. The mast arms would be shipped out in June. The actual contractor would begin between February and April. It had been moving kind of slow because the manufacturing was delayed due to flooding at one of the sites. The proposed completion date was the third quarter of the year. When they did arrive on site, there would be a more firm date of when they would be there. There would be four week look aheads provided to everyone and it would be updated every two weeks. The last project was the Flood Stat project. The Emergency Management Operating Center had received a grant to look at getting notifications of flooding in certain areas. The equipment would be placed at Fishburne/Hagood. When it started to flood, there would be a sensor that would send notification to signs in all four directions that would say the road was flooded. One of the other areas was William Ackerman in West Ashley. The construction started the previous week and was almost done. Mr. Benjamin said the last category were things that were either funded through City dollars or working with other departments to figure it out. The last year, they had funded an Assistant Manager to be a part of the signals division and they were grateful for that.

Councilmember Brady said he would be asked about this and said there was nothing for Johns Island. River and Maybank had been requested multiple times. Mr. Benjamin said that was why they wanted to get the County in there, because they could get the sense of where various funding came from. Maybank/River was an intersection that was funded through Transportation Sales Tax and would be worked on this year. The City was involved because it had to maintain that signal. It would be a mast arm, so they had to run everything through the City offices. Even for Main Road widening, the County asked if they could make some improvements at Main/Maybank to put pedestrian signals in and change a signal head. That still had to go through the City.

### **Director's Update**

Mr. Benjamin welcomed the new Councilmembers. They were excited about this year. If there were any questions, he was happy to answer them. They felt like, as a City, they were the best for navigating those questions. He wanted to thank everyone because they had not had any new, creative positions in their department since 2003. They now had seven new positions in the budget and it had been very helpful. It mattered very much to the staff. In the previous year, they didn't have a transportation sales tax request process with the County, but this year they did. Those requests were due in March. The staff had accumulated all the requests, including sidewalk requests and put them together in front of the Mayor, to then send to the County. Different than CTC, they could send however long of a list for sales tax. If there were areas of concern that they didn't have already listed, they wanted to make sure they were vetting those and adding.

Councilwoman Jackson said she had some older neighborhoods that had roads that needed to be resurfaced. She was told that the list was being delivered in February. She asked how long they had to

react to it. Mr. Benjamin stated that they had maintained a great relationship with Charleston County to get the list early. They had that list, and they were going to vet it to see what opportunities were there. Then, they would get the list out to the Councilmembers so they knew what was happening in their districts. One small change was that there used to be a drainage portion of TST. That was no longer the case, and that money was put toward bike/ped. They would be working on getting the streets that would need traffic calming and would bring it soon. If they had requests. On their desks at Council would be the approval of additions to the Bike/Ped Committee. He asked them to review and support. They had amazing people who would be on that Committee. Councilwoman Jackson had asked for an update on the 61 crossing. In the last TST awarding in 2018, some dollars were ascribed to study the 61 bikeway crossing. They had looked at options. The City, County, and SCDOT came to an agreement about what that should look like and were preparing to go to County Council last year to request funding. There were certain County councilmembers who were not in favor of it and decided to shift the funding from the 61 crossing to 61/Sycamore. Right before the holidays, and about a week ago, there had been site visits that had occurred regarding what improvements could move forward. SCDOT had made it clear that they were still supportive of a 61 bikeway crossing, but everyone had to be on board to figure it out.

Councilwoman Jackson asked if the County was included in everyone having to be on board if they weren't being asked to fund the build out. She asked if they could divide and conquer. Mr. Benjamin said that wasn't out of the question. The catch was the signalization piece. Mr. Mathis said that there had been discussion about decorative crosswalks. DOT had been presented with all the ideas such as a leading pedestrian interval. The second meeting occurred the previous week with many organizations such as Charleston Moves. They went to the intersection and walked along the bikeway and across the street so they could get an idea of what it felt like with the traffic and at night. There were a lot of comments such as how dark it was along the bikeway and at the intersection. Everyone agreed that the best place for the crossing was at the bikeway. There was a suggestion of making the connection from the bikeway to the intersection a multi-use path on both sides. County agreed to look into that. Mr. Benjamin said that funding had been approved for 61/Sycamore, so there was a dollar amount.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 2:34 p.m.