

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

February 25, 2020

A meeting of the Committee on Traffic and Transportation was held this date beginning at 2:32 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, Councilwoman Delcioppo, and Mayor Tecklenburg **Present:** Robbie Somerville, Keith Benjamin, Tracy McKee, Rick Jerue, Janie Borden, Mallary Scheer, and Bethany Whitaker, Council Secretary **Also Present:** Myra Paulson (Resident), James Wallis

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence provided by Councilwoman Delcioppo.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilwoman Delcioppo, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2020 meeting.

SCDOT Projects and Processes Overview

Mr. Benjamin stated that he was very grateful that District 6 SCDOT staff was there. As part of his responsibility, it was important to give the Committee a sense of all the different inter-agency work that they had to do to get things done. SCDOT were people that they worked out every day on many different projects, and it was important for them to come and introduce themselves, and also give a sense of what they were working on. They had been adamant about having regular communication amongst SCDOT, County, and City staff. After they heard that District 1 in Columbia had regularly scheduled meetings, Josh Johnson, Erica Adams, and he had the conversation about having that too and it had been beyond beneficial for them to have those regularly scheduled times and have moments of dialogue. They didn't agree on everything, but because there was a space to get an understanding it had been very helpful on many projects.

Tim Henderson stated that he had an organizational chart. The SCDOT was divided into seven districts in the State of South Carolina. District 6 consisted of six counties including Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, Berkeley, Dorchester, and Charleston. They had about 599 employees under his care. Of that number, they had about 20% vacant. They were struggling to keep their offices fully manned. Daniel Burton was their District Construction Engineer and he was over some of the special projects. He also managed a lot of the resident construction engineers. Kevin Turner was over all the bridge construction and bridge maintenance. He brought a lot of knowledge to the table from the private sector where he designed bridges. Michael Black was the District Maintenance Engineer. He was over all of the maintenance units including those driving the dump trucks, people fixing potholes, and individuals cleaning the ditches and mowing the roads. He had the responsibility for the majority of their staff. Josh Johnson was their District Traffic Engineer and dealt with the signals. Tim Parker was the District Mechanical Engineer and over all the shops. Juleigh Fleming was the District permit Engineer so she maintained and oversaw all the permits that came in on a big scale. Marcie Timmons was the District Contract Engineer and was the person that put a lot of the resurfacing packages together. That was the way their District was structured and most of the other districts were set up the same way.

Kevin Turner stated he dealt with construction, bridges, and the resurfacing program. He would answer anything they had questions about. One thing that was brought up was how they chose which roads got resurfaced and which did not. The short answer was that they followed State law. In 2007, the General Assembly had passed an act that spelled out which roads got resurfaced. There were about eight criteria that had no human input to them. They were purely things like how many cars were on the road. It was a very quantitative assessment. From that, they generated a candidate list for what would get resurfaced that year. Once they had that list, that's where the human element came in and they could score four criteria based on human input and their own observations. That allowed them to skew the scores up or down by up to 400 points out of the 1400 total points. A lot of people got upset that their roads hadn't been done, but they had to follow the ranking system and process. They could have impact on contractibility, road continuity. In District 6, they were able to do roughly 35 miles of road in resurfacing that year. Chairman Seekings asked if the list was generated county by county or district-wide. Mr. Turner said the list was district-wide, but the money was allocated on a county basis. Chairman Seekings asked how many total miles of roads were under their jurisdiction for repaving. Mr. Turner said that it was roughly 4,000 miles of state owned roads in District 6. Councilwoman Jackson said that was only State roads, and asked if they allowed other municipalities to jump in if they decided they couldn't wait on something. Mr. Turner said they did allow that. It wasn't uncommon for the CTC to be used because they were required to spend 25% of their monies on resurfacing. Many chose to do much more than that. Mayor Tecklenburg said that he wouldn't have brought this up if they weren't talking about paving, however if looked at some of the drainage grates, the slope was 8-10 inches below the surface of the new road. He knew that manhole covers were a little easier to deal with, but they needed some assistance in getting the storm drain grates to be flat with the surface. Mr. Turner said he would take it back and look. He was surprised that it hadn't been addressed when they resurfaced the road.

Mr. Turner continued and said that they had approximately 1,080 bridges in District 6 that they were responsible for and he got roughly \$460,000 per year to maintain all of them. Bridge repairs were very expensive. For the Wando Bridge, it was an instance where they had cultivated a relationship with each other to coordinate what they were doing for that bridge. There would be work coming up on the James Island Connector where they would do some weekend-long lane closures. There were seven expansion joints on the bridge that needed to be replaced. They would be starting that the last two weekends in March. That would allow them to avoid Spoleto and the graduations. Mr. Benjamin said that they had done a great job communicating and he wanted to see that duplicated with everything in the District. He said he could give an update on anything specific. Mayor Tecklenburg said that he would like a little more detail on the Wando Bridge. Mr. Turner said that the current thinking with the bridge was that they had a structure that, in bridge terms, was not that old. It was only about halfway through its lifespan. It was experiencing challenges that were not unique to that structure but were presenting a significant challenge. They had added redundancy to the main spans and that was done in parts, so that if a cable ruptured again, they had a redundancy built in. They had completed three of the four weekends of sealing on the top of the deck. That was an attempt to prevent water from getting into the structure which is what had caused the issues over the years. They were making some more miscellaneous repairs. They were also developing a strategy so that if any tendon were to rupture, they could completely replace it from inside the box and as issues happened. They knew they shouldn't blindly assume that this issue wouldn't happen again. They hoped to get the barrier wall off in March. Long-term, the bridge could require a replacement. They were taking into account the widening of 526 and if it became an eight lane section, it was likely that the bridges wouldn't be able to accommodate that and would require replacement. Currently, the replacement was being worked into the cost estimates of

the eastern phase of the 526 project. However, right now they were acting as though the structures needed to be there for another 75 years.

Mayor Tecklenburg said that when they talked about life of bridges, he would expect that the James Island Expressway was in good shape. He knew the County had been doing a major corridor study of 17 from 26 to Avondale. He asked what they thought the life expectancy of the West Ashley Bridges was. Mr. Turner said that was a good question. They would be doing a night-time detour of that structure coming up in March to do some routine maintenance on the machines, because those bridges were machines. It was a challenge because they were being hemmed in from a right of way standpoint. They might not be left with any other alternative other than to figure out how to keep the bridges going, potentially forever. There was the hospital, new developments, the round Holiday Inn, the marina, and the pump station. They would have gone into the middle if they replaced or expanded the bridges. There was potential for the pedestrian bridge that was coming. They were looking at the structure and more than likely they would end up with a major mechanical overhaul where they would rip the mechanical parts out and float in new spans. Those were the biggest issues. Otherwise, they were actively seeking someone to do some resurfacing on the south-bound structure. They had reached out to a number of companies and met some resistance. It was very risky work and there wasn't enough profit for them to do it.

Josh Johnson, Traffic Engineer, said he oversaw signals, signs, markings, traffic studies, and complaints about traffic. The last time he was there he had provided the graphic about the 526 signals and construction. They were mostly on schedule. Glenn McConnell Parkway, the last work order, was done except some communication equipment. Then, they would be able to get the retiming work started and done. For as large as a project, 62 intersections, he thought it was in good shape. Something he was proud of was the 700 Crosswalks project. Pedestrian safety was important. One of the struggles he had, from a staffing standpoint, was getting things designed. He didn't have the ability to hire a consultant, but the City had that ability and was able to bring on a consultant to do some designs. They issued two separate construction contracts. One was done and the other would be done. That was for ten intersections downtown for pedestrian upgrades. Over the course of seven years, they wanted to upgrade 700 crosswalks in the district. That would consist of things like upgrading by going to new countdown pedestrian heads or upgrading the ramps. So far, they had done 88. Outside of that, he could answer questions. Councilwoman Jackson said that with the examples of the mid-block pedestrian crosswalks and straightening crosswalk at Harborview and Folly, she asked if those were examples of things they would do. Mr. Johnson said that would be outside his purview. The ones they would be completing were mostly dealing with signalization. It didn't mean there wasn't room or other opportunities to discuss those other intersections. Councilwoman Jackson said they were experiencing a new population boom in older suburbs and they were experiencing building demands by residents who were used to a more pedestrian friendly lifestyle. They just needed some overall thinking about their region that was becoming one of the most tangible examples of urbanization.

Councilmember Brady asked if they could discuss the six criteria that were needed for a protected left turn at an intersection. Mr. Johnson said that he wouldn't get caught up in the six criteria. When they looked at an intersection for that, the first thing they asked was if there was a dedicated turn lane. If there wasn't, then it wouldn't function. At that point, there were criteria such as traffic and volume that they measured to look at the amount of conduit to see if the criteria was met. Mayor Tecklenburg said that he wanted to thank the representatives from the SCDOT for being with them. He also wanted to thank them for their increasing coordination and cooperation. That was to everyone's benefit. They knew that the SCDOT had some rules

that were frustrating. Another thing they could talk about was about the sidewalks, trees, and creating a nice urban environment. All of that came into play and they worked it out as it came along, but they were thankful for the spirit of working together to make their streets safer. Chairman Seekings said that he also wanted to thank them for attending. It was helpful for them to be able to update their constituents. He represented the historic downtown district and there were a few things he heard about a lot. One thing they heard about a lot was steel plates being left behind. The placement and securing of those was a big deal because when they weren't secured right, they were very loud. He asked if they could remind their contractors to pay some attention when they were putting those down. It greatly affected the quality of life. The other thing was rules and regulations SCDOT was bound by and the reality of the City's geography. One street that was of great interest to everyone was Calhoun Street. There were times where it was absolute mayhem in that area. If they were coming from the James Island Connector towards downtown, at Coming Street there was a left turn signal but no left turn lane and it functioned well. He was wondering if they could have a conversation about adding a left turn signal at St. Philip and King Street. It would make a massive difference. Mayor Tecklenburg stated that he didn't know how much of a difference it made to drainage. Many drains in the City were clogged, especially along Folly, Harborview, and Hwy 61. He asked if they could take a look at the major roads and possibly set up a project or program to get some safer equipment out there. Councilwoman Jackson said that would be very helpful.

Traffic Calming Update

Mr. Somerville thanked the Committee for approving the \$111,000 to get caught up on traffic calming. It also helped them get a maintenance plan together. Traffic calming started in 1999 and they had treated 81 different neighborhoods and installed 564 traffic calming devices. Traffic calming devices ranged from street tables, to raised crosswalks. They also had the 12 foot speed humps on City streets. Last year, they installed 13 traffic calming speed humps, and two raised crosswalks. With additional money, they worked on the maintenance plan. They had speed humps that were over 20 years old. They were able to get about 40 speed humps recoated and updated. Mr. Benjamin said that maintenance lasted up to nine years, if they were lucky. At the next meeting, they would be bringing a few more locations for speed humps. They were sitting on 49 locations at this time, subject to change, for maintenance plans. They were looking at that by age. Mr. Benjamin stated that essentially, the budget had come back up to what it had been originally. This year, they were looking at clearing out the backlog in maintenance, so that they could really focus on new requests. About two years ago, they were sitting on about \$500,000 in requests. That number had come down to \$194,000 in costs which was about 49 individual humps. Those requests were not all requests from neighborhoods who had submitted the necessary petitions.

Chairman Seeking asked how many approved applied requests were out there that were not installed. Mr. Somerville said that right now, they had two locations. They did have \$197,000 in requests that were received last year of potential locations. Councilwoman Jackson asked what they called stop signs. Mr. Somerville said that stop signs were not traffic calming because it was a controlled stop. Traffic calming continued the flow, but at a safer speed. Stop signs were cheaper, but the problem was they became rolling stops. They had to be careful about how they were treating streets. Mr. Benjamin stated that he wanted traffic calming to be what it used to be and what it was intended to be. There were a lot of options for opportunities.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

Bethany Whitaker
Council Secretary