

## MEETING MINUTES

### **PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

8:00 A.M. – February 7, 2019  
City Hall – Conference Room A

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#### **I. CALL TO ORDER:**

At 8:00 a.m., Chairman Doug Roberts called the meeting to order.

#### **II. ROLL CALL:**

##### Members Present:

Chairman, Doug Roberts  
Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff  
Public Works Director, Peter Rice  
Police Captain, Frank Warchol  
Fire Chief, Steven Achilles  
Member, Ralph DiBernardo  
Member, Mary Lou McElwain  
Member, Harold Whitehouse  
Alternate Member, Steve Pesci

##### Member Absent:

Member, Shari Donnermeyer

##### Staff Advisors Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby  
Parking Director, Ben Fletcher

#### **III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:**

Ralph DiBernardo moved to accept the meeting minutes of the January 10, 2019 meeting, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

#### **IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the financial report dated December 31, 2018, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 9-0.**

#### **V. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Charles McMahan spoke to action item VIII.A. (Echo Avenue exit closure). The results of the pilot study indicated that there was no major impacts. He thanked the Committee for the time they had spent on the project and looked forward to hearing the final vote.

#### **VI. PRESENTATION:**

##### **A. Downtown Traffic Model, by Erica Wygonik, RSG Inc.**

Erica Wygonik commented that RSG, Inc. had undergone a significant effort to develop a downtown traffic model for the City of Portsmouth, and conduct its first scenario. The purpose of this presentation was to explain the components of the model, and the results of the scenario. A microsimulation model is a very detailed picture of a traffic network. It is meant to represent the reality of the traffic patterns as much as possible. A microsimulation is especially useful for a complex traffic environment, like a downtown. It

allows the City to test significant traffic changes in the model to evaluate how they will impact the traffic in real life. It can evaluate scenarios such as adding a new road, installing a new traffic signal, adding a new roundabout, and more. The tool considers how vehicles would re-route as a result of a change. A microsimulation is the most useful to show the impact of a major change. The tool accounts for the impact of pedestrians, but it does not take into account the impact on pedestrians. The tool focuses on the vehicular experience. The model includes a lot of detail for the roads and the intersections to provide the most accurate results. The user tells the model where the vehicle will start and where it will end. The model will then look at the traffic delays and intersections and determines which path would make the most sense. There was a significant amount of turning movement data collected for this model. The peak hour that was modeled for this was 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Public Works Director Peter Rice questioned if they took into account the proposed developments in the area in the traffic counts. Erica Wygonik responded that they did not because they used the current ground counts from 2017 for the model. Anything that was built when the Deer St. Garage counts were completed and the 2017 counts were completed, was included.

Harold Whitehouse questioned what the main purpose is of a roundabout. Erica Wygonik responded that she used the roundabout as an example of a major change that could be used in the model. A roundabout can have a number of purposes. Roundabouts have been shown to reduce severe crashes, so they are useful in areas where that may be an issue.

Erica Wygonik presented a video of the baseline model simulation to the Committee. It showed street parking and vehicles flowing through intersections. The model shows the signals at intersections changing as well as pedestrians using the crosswalks. The tool indirectly accounts for jaywalkers. The model accounts for friction factors that will slow vehicles down like jaywalking and parking turnover.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if a specific time of day and month were used for the model. Erica Wygonik responded that they used the peak hour of the peak month. The p.m. peak hour had the highest overlap of vehicles and pedestrians. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the model accounted for Memorial Bridge closures. Erica Wygonik responded that the particular model they were looking at did not have a bridge closure.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if the model extended to Parrot Avenue. Erica Wygonik responded that it did not. Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if parking had an impact on the model. Erica Wygonik confirmed that it did. Cars will enter and exit parking spaces in the model and affect traffic around them. They used the Smarking data to help inform the parking usage in the model. Public Works Director Peter Rice clarified that Smarking was a data collection system used by the Parking Division. It is real-time data. Erica Wygonik added that it provided data on where people are parking by zone. The turnover in the model is closely aligned to the data that was collected.

Steve Pesci requested clarification on the term "O and D." Erica Wygonik responded that it stood for origins and destinations. The whole downtown area is separated into zones.

They have to figure out how many vehicles are leaving and entering each zone in the hour and where are they coming from and going. It is all accounted for in the model matrix, and they ensure the results align with the turning movement data.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned if the model addressed vehicle speeds. Erica Wygonik responded that they start with the posted speed limit and use the typical real-life speed, if the data is available. Portsmouth had observed speed data for many streets. The vehicle speeds varied in the model.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if large delivery trucks were in the model. There is a lot of truck traffic downtown. Erica Wygonik responded that there was vehicle class information included in the model. The truck traffic is calibrated to the traffic count data. There is less truck traffic in the p.m. peak hour because deliveries tend to happen in the morning. Bus routes are captured in the model.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned if the model accounted for emergency vehicle responses because the Central Fire Station is in the middle of the downtown. Erica Wygonik responded that it was not in this model. Fire Chief Steven Achilles questioned if it could be added as a scenario. Erica Wygonik responded that it had not been done before, but she would look into it.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if they could run a scenario in the model to evaluate the signal timings to improve the pedestrian traffic between the Foundry Place Garage and the downtown. Erica Wygonik stated it could be evaluated in the model.

Erica Wygonik explained the congestion results from the baseline model. The results are categorized by level of service and given a grade of A-F. A is the best and means there is no delay; F is the worst and indicates a large amount of congestion.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that the level of service is only for the vehicles and some states have abandoned using this evaluation system all together. Erica Wygonik responded that there are many strong opinions about level of service (LOS). It is a useful tool to provide a snapshot of the vehicle experience. This model shows vehicle delays only and does not show pedestrian delays.

Steve Pesci pointed out that getting an A for every intersection would not be realistic. The City should be aiming for B's and C's. Erica Wygonik agreed. Traffic is a good sign of a vibrant downtown and a LOS of D and E would be acceptable in a downtown.

Public Works Director Peter Rice reminded the Committee that this model was developed to evaluate the two-way scenario. Steve Pesci was happy that the City invested in this tool, so they can have informed discussions. UNH Durham has a similar model and found it very useful. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that models are only as good as the data. This model was created specifically to address the two-way scenario and it's useful for the model area only.

Ralph DiBernardo pointed out that this was just a very preliminary look at the two-way scenario using a tool. There were no actual changes proposed.

Police Captain Frank Warchol requested clarification on why the Committee was looking into the two-way scenario. He questioned if it was because something was broken or if it was to improve efficiency. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that there was an article in the packet that outlined the many benefits of two-way streets in a downtown. It can improve walkability, business development, traffic safety, and emergency access. It would be a big change that should be considered carefully, but there could be benefits.

Erica Wygonik noted that an important thing to remember is that the model looks at vehicle delays and operations. Jeff Speck identifies a lot of potential benefits for going to a two-way street that this model will not evaluate. This model will show what the vehicle circulation impacts would be. This scenario is not the only factor that should be considered in a decision to go two-way.

Erica Wygonik showed a map of the area. State Street from Middle Street to Pleasant Street, Pleasant Street to Market Square, and Congress Street from Market Square to Maplewood Avenue were all changed to two-way streets in the model. There was a lot of discussion about what area to include when making the model. This area was selected to prevent parking loss. If extended to Daniel Street there would be more on-street parking removed. Any two-way road conversion would involve some infrastructure costs, but extending it to Memorial Bridge would have resulted in significant costs. They looked at converting Penhallow Street or Chapel Street to a two-way road, but both are too narrow.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned if they evaluated the benefits of the two-way conversion. Erica Wygonik responded that most of the benefits of two-way traffic are not evaluated in this model. Most of the benefits are improved pedestrian safety, improved access to businesses, etc. Those would not be apparent in the model.

Erica Wygonik summarized the changes that would be required to change the roadways to two-way streets. Some parking would be moved from State Street to Congress Street. The intersection signal timings would need to change at the intersection of Maplewood Avenue and Hanover Street. Market Square would require some new striping. The Maplewood Avenue, Islington Street and Congress Street intersection would require new signal heads. New signal heads would also be required at Fleet Street and State Street, and Pleasant Street and State Street. The most significant impact would be at the State Street and Middle Street intersection. It would require an intersection reconstruction. It could involve drainage work, curb work, and new signal heads. A roundabout could be considered but would need to be studied.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if parking would be removed from one side of State Street and added to both sides of Congress Street. Erica Wygonik responded that parking would be removed on the north side of State Street and added to the south side of Congress Street.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if the Fire Department had traffic signal preemption at the Fleet Street and State Street intersection. Fire Chief Steven Achilles confirmed that was correct. Public Works Director Pete Rice added that they had control over most

of the newer signals.

Erica Wygonik showed a graphic depicting the level of service at each intersection after running the model with the two-way scenario. In general, most of the network is fairly unaffected. Congestion gets a little worse at the intersections at State Street and Middle Street, and Fleet Street and Congress Street. It would be a policy decision at Market Square about how much congestion is acceptable and what should be implemented to mitigate it. The approach to the scenario in the model was to implement things to make the two-way conversion work. There was nothing implemented in the scenario to make things better. Market Square is a complicated intersection to convert to two-way traffic. A signal was not added to the Market Square intersection in the model, but it could be. A signal would probably improve movement through the intersection. A roundabout could also be considered for Market Square. If nothing was done to Market Square and it went to two-way traffic, then there would be more congestion. It is considered an acceptable amount of congestion for a downtown, but it may not be acceptable for this community.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if she was aware of any communities that restricted using electronics in a crosswalk. Erica Wygonik responded that she was not.

Erica Wygonik noted that the model showed there was a slight increase in total delay, slight increase in average travel time across the downtown, slight decrease in average vehicle speed, and no change in vehicle miles traveled. From a vehicular perspective, the model shows that adopting a two-way conversion would be fine. There are other factors that should be considered when making the decision, but from a vehicular perspective, it works.

There was a discussion about traffic at the beginning of the two-way conversion and how it would change over time. Erica Wygonik stated the model reflected steady conditions. It does not show conditions after the first week of the conversion. She stated the one caveat is that the origins and destinations were not changed for the scenario and drivers may change routes over time because of the two-way conversion.

Police Captain Frank Warchol questioned if they looked at converting Congress Street to a two-way intersection from Maplewood Avenue to Fleet Street and not all the way to Market Square. Erica Wygonik responded that they did not. He noted that it would be a lot of vehicle movement in Market Square, and that concerned him. Erica Wygonik responded that the model did not show a large increase in people going the other way on Congress Street.

Steve Pesci noted that the Foundry Place Garage was not a destination in the model. That could impact some of the results. There are many things that relate to Market Square that are not traffic based. He hoped that the City would continue to invest in the tool to allow for more scenarios to be developed and studied.

Erica Wygonik summarized some of the research conducted on drawbridge scenarios and alternatives. Lift data was obtained from NHDOT. The average lift duration was 6.5 minutes. In the spring 43% of the weekday p.m. peak hours had a bridge lift. There was a model that included a bridge lift. The biggest concern was how far the queuing went

back and how much that would increase with two-way traffic. The queues did get worse with two-way traffic, but it was not horrible.

Ralph DiBernardo asked about blocked intersections in the bridge lift scenarios. Erica Wygonik responded that most people are polite and do not block intersections. They did observe a secondary situation after a bridge lift when Kittery traffic comes into Portsmouth. Market Square suffers during these times.

Fire Chief Steven Achilles expressed concern about queuing on State Street and that fire access can be significantly impacted during those times. If the road changed to two-way then the fire engine would be able to traverse State Street. She spoke to the fire in June on Daniel Street. If the lift bridge was up, they would not have been able to respond as fast as they did. The two-way conversion does not necessarily have to be a loop. It could just be a street or two. Erica Wygonik agreed that it did not necessarily need to be a loop, but they did need to ensure that vehicles had somewhere to go at the end of the road.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Parrott Avenue and Rogers Street commercial traffic, school bus traffic and traffic congestion resulting from student drop off/pick up at the Middle School.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if the School Board Chairman was aware of the issue. Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff responded that she would confirm they are notified.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to refer to staff for report back, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 9-0.**

## VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Report back on 6-month trial closure of Turnpike exit ramp onto Echo Avenue.

Harold Whitehouse moved to keep closure in place, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Fire Chief Steven Achilles noted that the Fire Department had not experienced any significant issues with the closure, but requested delaying permanent closure until the Woodbury Avenue Bridge construction is completed. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it would be a while before the City had resources to permanently close the exit, so it can remain closed as it is now until the bridge is finished.

Harold Whitehouse withdrew his motion.

Fire Chief Steven Achilles moved to extend the trial closure of Turnpike exit ramp onto Echo Avenue until the completion of the Woodbury Avenue Bridge, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 9-0.**

B. Report back on request for STOP sign and crosswalk on Bow Street at Chapel Street, by John Sherman. Eric Eby noted that they looked at the sight lines at the corner and there is very limited sight distance at that intersection. It would not be a safe pedestrian crosswalk location. Adding a crosswalk will not improve the sight lines. If people want to cross at that location they can, but they would be more careful if there was not a crosswalk on the ground.



Ralph DiBernardo added that it was not appropriate to install a crosswalk and lead people into an unsafe condition.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if a No Left Turn sign on Chapel Street was going to be addressed. Eric Eby responded that it was included in the report back. There previously was a left turn restriction at Chapel Street, but it was removed by the PTS Committee several years ago.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to place report on file, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 9-0.**

C. Report back on Islington Street/Bartlett Street pedestrian signal questions.

Eric Eby noted that the question was when can a vehicle make a right turn on red. He provided a handout in the packet from the New Hampshire Drivers Manual. The document states, "you may make a right turn on a red signal only if: there is no sign prohibiting a right turn on red and (if the intersection is equipped) a steady DON'T WALK signal is being displayed. Then, you may make a right turn after yielding to pedestrians and other traffic in, or approaching, the intersection. NOTE: It is a violation of the law to make a right turn on red when a steady or flashing walk signal is being displayed even if there are no pedestrians in the crosswalk."

Eric Eby also stated that turns are allowed on a right arrow after stopping if there are no pedestrians in the crosswalk and if the walk/don't walk signal is not flashing.

D. Report back on request for parking space in bike lane buffer at 60 Lafayette Road, by Planning Director Juliet Walker. Eric Eby noted that there is adequate roadway width, but it would require a redesign of the bike lane. The gas station parcel is going to be redeveloped. It is the opinion of staff to wait until the parcel is developed to redesign the area.

Fire Chief Steven Achilles moved to table the request, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

E. Report back on Neighborhood Traffic Calming requests:

1. Brackett Road
2. Brackett Lane
3. South Street

Eric Eby recommended no traffic calming measures for all three roads. Speeds and pedestrian volumes were recorded. There were no significant issues that were observed. The City will look to replace the old overhead flashing beacon at Brackett Lane and South Street, with one that is larger and brighter.

Chairman Doug Roberts was concerned about the section of South Street between Middle Street and Middle Road. There are no sidewalks, but there is a playground and a school nearby. Eric Eby responded that there is a sidewalk along the playground side of the street.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to place reports on file, seconded by Steve Pesci.

**Motion passed 9-0.**

F. Edward Street closure, report back on proposed closure plan.

Eric Eby commented that the goal is to improve the pedestrian facilities around Whipple Park. Edward Street would be closed and a sidewalk installed. This will help make the park more accessible. It would tighten up the intersection at Parrot Avenue. The yield sign would become a stop sign and the pedestrian crossing distance would be shortened.

Harold Whitehouse noted that the materials from the Pleasant Street project are an eye sore and it damaged some of the greenery in the park. They should be obligated to clean up and restore the area. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the Pleasant Street project was not complete and clean up would happen once completed.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to move the proposal forward to the appropriate department for implementation, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 9-0.**

**IX. INFORMATIONAL:**

A. Foundry Place Parking Garage usage and traffic volume update, by Parking Director Ben Fletcher.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher presented data from November to December 2018. The increase in transient collections during this time was fairly significant. There was an increase in monthly contracts as well.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned the increase and capacity. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that they were still 25% full and there was a 100% increase. The transient collection was about \$450 for November and it was double that for December. The January numbers show a slight decrease from December, but that is normal.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the hotels were using valet parking in the garage. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded they were not. The Committee discussed the parking lot in front of the Foundry Place Garage and wayfinding signage for the garage.

Steve Pesci questioned what would trigger valet parking use at Foundry Place Garage. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded valet parking in City parking spaces is not allowed. A policy change would be required to allow it. Parking Director Ben Fletcher added that hotels might ask for spaces once other available lots are redeveloped.

B. Police grants, by Police Captain Frank Warchol.

Police Captain Frank Warchol stated there are six (6) traffic enforcement grants issued through the NH Highway Safety totaling \$32,000. Step Patrol helps identify through statistics where to place officers in the City. Operation Safe Commute are state mandated days where officers on duty from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. monitor aggressive drivers. Join the Click promotes seatbelt enforcement for the younger population. There are grants for distracted driving, pedestrians and bicycles, and driving while impaired (DWI) patrols and mobilization.



C. “The Many Benefits of Making One-Way Streets to Two-Way,” column by Eric Jaffe, CityLab (The Atlantic). Document provided in the packet.

D. Jeff Speck argues for two-way streets in Portsmouth (2015).  
<https://tinyurl.com/speck2waystreets>

Chairman Roberts provided a link to Jeff Speck’s talk on two-way streets in Portsmouth.

E. Parking Workshop.

Chairman Doug Roberts invited the Committee to the March 25, 2019 meeting at the Portsmouth Library with the City Council to discuss parking principles. He stated various City Boards would be present. Information will be forthcoming.

Harold Whitehouse mentioned the McIntyre Project Meeting on March 5, 2019. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that parking may not be the focus of that particular meeting. Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff stated that a 3-D model would be presented at the meeting.

F. Cate Street connector public meeting, by Planning Director Juliet Walker.

Eric Eby informed the Committee of the February 12, 2019 meeting. The focus will be discussing the status of the Frank Jones Center redevelopment project with the neighborhood. He stated the project may include a connector road through the site between Bartlett Street and Borthwick Avenue. Staff would be presenting the traffic calming measure proposals for Bartlett Street again for the neighborhood to gauge interest.

Ralph DiBernardo requested information on pedestrian traffic on the other side of Bartlett Street. There is a project on Cate Street that will increase pedestrian traffic. Eric Eby responded that the developer would be doing some improvements to the intersection of Cate Street and Bartlett Street, which will include pedestrian improvements.

Mary Lou McElwain clarified that the private developer would be making the improvements. Eric Eby confirmed that was correct. They will be widening the Cate Street approach to Bartlett Street and adding a crosswalk across Bartlett Street. The crosswalk will be installed at the auto repair shop to ensure there are safe sight lines.

G. PTS Open Action Items. No Committee discussion.

**X. MISCELLANEOUS:**

Steve Pesci asked about the status of the Shared Active Transportation Ordinance. Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff responded that it had been approved by City Council.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the City was entering into a contract with Zagster for the final year. Eric Eby confirmed that was correct. Mary Lou McElwain requested a report back on the number of Zagster users and revenue. She also requested a report on ancillary parking lots usage in the City.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT – at 9:50 a.m., VOTED to adjourn.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey  
PTS Recording Secretary