

# Ashland Traffic Safety Commission

## Minutes

### February 28, 2008

**Members Present:** Alan Bender, Patti Busse, Matt Warshawsky (Chair), Greg Lemhouse, Doris Mannion, Colin Swales, Eric Heesacker, Kate Jackson

**Members Absent:** Terry Doyle

**Staff Present:** Karl Johnson, Jim Olson, Nancy Slocum, Officer Steve MacClennan

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Matt Warshawsky called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM in the Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street. The meeting was opened with a moment of silence for Southern Oregon University (SOU) student Gladys Jimenez and all those affected by her tragic death.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: December 6, 2007 minutes were approved as submitted.

II. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

A. PUBLIC FORUM

Theodore Holden, 107 Alida, stated that as a 30 year resident of Alida Street he was concerned about the speeding cars around the high school, especially Morse Street. He requested 20 mph school zone signs on streets surrounding the high school.

Warshawsky said it would be placed on the agenda for the March meeting.

B. REVIEW OF TRAFFIC REQUESTS/PROJECTS PENDING/ACTION REQUIRED

1. Request for Special Vehicle Permit

Staff Liaison and Interim Public Works Director James Olson noted that the Commission had reviewed several pedicab permits in the past. There was an existing ordinance and Special Vehicle Permit form. A representative of the applicant, Marco Alvarez, was at the meeting to answer questions. He stated that the “ecocab” would serve two to three passengers.

Busse was concerned about passenger loading and unloading adjacent to parked cars. The representative said there would be dedicated bike stations around town. He would also have warning signs in front of and behind the cab during loading and unloading.

Warshawsky said that drivers of the pedicab serve as an example to others and should be required to wear a helmet. There should also be three helmets available for passengers that request them. In addition, the law requires children under the age of 16 must wear helmets.

Lemhouse moved to issue the special vehicle permit with the condition that the driver wear a bicycle helmet at all times and that three helmets be available for passengers. Swales seconded the motion and it passed 7 to 0 with one abstention.

## 2. Siskiyou Boulevard Pedestrian Safety

Jim Olson, Interim Public Works Director and staff liaison to the Commission, provided the staff report. The recent pedestrian death on Siskiyou Boulevard at the Garfield Street crosswalk has mobilized the community as witnessed by the number of people in the audience. The previous two Commission meetings have included a study of the type, location and number of pedestrian related crashes on Siskiyou Boulevard and other main streets. At the December meeting the Commission reviewed a report by the pedestrian safety sub-committee listing a number of opportunities for improvement, especially in the field of driver and pedestrian education.

There current crosswalks in front of SOU are well done as a result of the Siskiyou Boulevard redesign, but the improvements did not go far enough to reduce the number of pedestrian related crashes. Olson noted the need to increase the attention of both drivers and pedestrians to the crosswalks. He recommended a number of improvement options including education, enforcement and engineering efforts which should be weighed, considered, adopted and put into action. The goal of this meeting was to develop a recommended list of efforts to put into motion as quickly as possible.

Olson listed both short term improvements and long term improvements. Short term improvements include:

1. Education: posters, articles, etc. Ashland produced a video in 2002 entitled "Watch Out for Each Other" It was available for borrowing.
2. Enforcement: Police Chief Terry Holderness committed to conducting a set of stings. The Police Department will issue citations to both drivers and pedestrians.
3. Engineering:
  - a. Petition ODOT engineer to lower speed limit from 30 to 25 mph. Even a 5 mph difference would make a marked reduction in the number and severity of accidents.
  - b. Increase luminaries from 70 to 150 watts. Begin with 30' mast light (cobra heads) then, if needed, change out the pedestrian scale lights between North Mountain and Wightman. (Estimated cost \$5,000)
  - c. Install rumble strips in north bound lanes between Wightman and Bridge Streets and in southbound lanes between Mountain Avenue and University Way. (Estimated cost \$1340)
  - d. Install pavement markings following the rumble strips. (Estimated cost \$1,200)

Longer term improvements are recommended to the four crosswalks adjacent to SOU. The Bridge Street crosswalk was the busiest, but Garfield Street was the most problematic as it was an 80' angled crosswalk that crossed five lanes of traffic (including a turn lane) and did not intersect the raised median. Staff listed several options for this intersection including closing it to limit its use. Although it would still be used, pedestrians would tend to be more cautious. If it was to remain open, then staff recommended installing a pedestrian activated flashing amber beacon on both sides. Staff also recommended installing a pedestrian activated flashing amber beacons at Bridge Street including a midblock beacon. In-pavements lights could be effective, but they were relatively expensive. Staff would negotiate with Southern

Oregon University to assist the City with the \$10,000 to \$15,000 cost. Other options included European “Zebra” markings as brought forward by Commissioner Swale and special lighting as done in Germany.

Questions for Staff:

Warshawsky asked if Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) needed to approve pavement markings. Olson said no. Warshawsky referred to the December 6, 2007 minutes and the decision to put pedestrian activated beacons on Bridge Street.

Busse was in favor of increasing the wattage of the cobra heads, but suggested expanding the zone to include Frances Lane. She wondered how quickly the change could take place. Olson noted that it could be done immediately depending upon the stock at hand.

Swales asked staff to expand on the jurisdictional issue. He recommended a “special transportation area” similar to Jacksonville. Olson noted that speed limits throughout the state are controlled by ODOT. He would look into the idea of a special transportation area which would require vehicles to travel through the area with their headlights on.

Bender asked for clarification on the engineering options and asked about closing Garfield Street at Siskiyou to left turns. Olson said that ODOT would be available as a resource for engineering improvements. He noted that Garfield was used for on-street parking for university students. Olson believed that citizens would oppose closing the intersection to left hand turns. Bender asked about the potential for a signaled light at Garfield Street. Olson said that it would not meet state required warrants. At a cost of \$300,000, he thought other engineering improvements would work as well.

Lemhouse asked if staff had spoken to SOU regarding a pedestrian bridge. Olson had looked at that option, but bridges must be ADA accessible meaning that a large area would be needed for ramps. With students typically taking the shortest route, he doubted the bridge would be used much.

Mannion asked about the increased cost of changing beacons from pedestrian-activated to sensor-activated. Olson said that studies show that only 75% of pedestrians would push a button, but sensor-activated beacons have double the hardware meaning increased maintenance and cost. Mannion said the lack of street/pedestrian lighting on the university side of Siskiyou should also be addressed.

Heesacker asked if the Garfield crosswalk could be relocated. Olson said that the sidewalk was positioned to anticipate the greatest usage. Heesacker wondered if hanging lights were less expensive. Olson said yes, but that embedded lights were shown to be more effective.

Public Comment:

Michael Dawkins, 646 East Main Street, said he was annoyed with the Ashland Daily Tidings coverage of the accident. He said that this section of Siskiyou needed better

enforcement to have it become known as a speed trap. He suggested the use of a reader board and cameras to record violators.

Eric Rodriquez, Co-director of SOU Public Safety, agreed with most of staff's recommendations, however, he did not agree with closing the Garfield Street crosswalk. He suggested adopting the increased lighting proposal up to and including Frances Lane. He said ideally all crosswalks in town would have better lighting. Rodriquez said that SOU was anxious to partner with the City especially in education and as grant partners. He said enforcement was critical and asked the Police Department for a larger presence on Siskiyou. He said grant money should be available for police overtime. Bender asked Rodriquez if SOU had an opinion on a traffic signal at Garfield. Rodriquez said he did not object to a signal. Lemhouse asked if SOU was willing to assist the City financially. Rodriquez noted that only Vice President Greg Morse could commit funds, however, he recommended beginning discussions immediately.

Preston Moser, 1501 Siskiyou Boulevard, witnessed the latest pedestrian accident and asked the Commission to petition ODOT to lower the speed limit to 20 mph. He agreed that flashing beacons should be made sensor-activated.

Ronald Corallo, 805 Indiana Street, was a 38 year resident. He previously asked Mayor Morrison to look into increasing the lighting wattage on Siskiyou. He noted that there was no provisional lane at Indiana Street and that students regularly walk through the red light in that location. He said six or seven street lights were burnt out and that the Electric Department should check lights more than once per month. Warshawsky encouraged both citizens and police officers to call the Electric Department to report burnt out street lights.

William Heimann, 647 Siskiyou Boulevard, wanted to emphasize education to improve pedestrian safety. He favored classroom education for incoming students and crosswalk violators. He also suggested marking the poles that hold the orange flags with an orange strip. He thought it would help bring attention to the crosswalks.

Dr. Deltra Ferguson, 345 Maple Street, worked at SOU's Woman's Resource Center located underground in Stevenson Union. She had experience both as a driver and as a pedestrian as she crosses at the Garfield Street crosswalk twice daily. She calls the crosswalk the "Garfield Gauntlet" and supported Rodriquez's idea of improving all crosswalks in Ashland. She was in favor of the rumble strips especially to warn drivers at sunrise. She also favored embedded lights and keeping the Garfield crosswalk open. She asked to be kept informed of the Commission's/City's progress on improving pedestrian safety.

Marshall Umpleby, 1012 Hillview Drive, complimented staff on their significant progress thus far. He favored increasing the street light wattage, decreasing speed limits, use of rumble bumps, continued use of flags (he saw usage increasing), installing motion-activated flashing beacons and continuing education that included bicyclists. He was pleased that SOU representatives were present. He suggested crossing guards, making cell phones illegal for drivers, then pedestrians. He thought the most expensive improvement would be embedded crosswalk lights.

Egon DuBois, 381 W Nevada Street, was a bicycle educator for 12 years and thought education was not the best option. He thought Ashland had a unique problem with a busy collector street dividing a college campus. He favored making crosswalks controlled using a signal. He noted that the median had heavy vegetation that blocked the view of drivers. He said the lack of money was not acceptable and that grant money was available.

Tom Reid, 918 Walker Avenue, owned the building at the corner of Siskiyou and Garfield. He saw the aftermath of the accident. He favored a traffic signal at Garfield and LED lights for most crosswalks in town.

Monique Teal, 40 Wightman Street #1, was the SOU Student Body President. She thought that pedestrian safety was a community problem. She believed that closing the Garfield Street crosswalk would be dangerous. She suggested that flashing beacons be installed at all four crosswalks adjacent to the university. Teal offered her help as well as other student leader's help. Lemhouse reminded the audience that there was an opening on the Commission for a Student Liaison.

Pam Marsh, 696 Siskiyou Boulevard #1, was also a member of the Planning Commission and offered the Commission's assistance for future collaboration. She lived at the corner of Morton and Siskiyou and noted that this area was also dangerous as there was no crosswalk. Vehicles sped at 50 to 60 mph and the intersection lacked visual stops. She urged making the full span of Siskiyou safer for pedestrians through reduced speed limits, flashing beacons at all crosswalks and a traffic light at Garfield Street.

Cate Hartzell, 881 E Main Street, was a City Councilor and thanked the Commission and staff. She cautioned against a "stop gap" solution. She supported bringing in more expertise to study the problem. She believed the City should not rely on education and enforcement to reach everyone. Increased lighting wattage may not be the solution. She favored investing money for a study to get the best solution(s).

Art Bullock, 791 Glendower, also thanked the Commission. He said that pedestrians had the right of way at intersections whether or not there is a marked crosswalk. He urged enforcement of the right of way laws, not just a sting. North Mountain, Oak Street, North Main were also dangerous for pedestrians. Bullock recommended adopting a legal hand signal for pedestrians to use when crossing the street.

Tracy Harding, 334 Bridge Street, favored education and asked people not to overuse cars and to slow down. She noted that next year the high school would be using Lincoln School so the focus of improvements should be extended. Olson noted that high schools were not subject to the 20 mph school zone laws.

Heidi Parker, 344 Bridge Street, was a member of the school board. She reported that Bellview School would be closed next year for remodeling causing an increase in children using lower Iowa. She noted there were no crosswalks and that the sidewalk ended at Bridge Street. She favored student education and noted that crossing guards

would be utilized. She thought increased street lighting should be extended to Morse Street. She offered her assistance to improved pedestrian safety.

Eve Woods, 1103 Withington Street, Medford, was a student at SOU and a volunteer at the Woman's Resource Center. Her mother attended SOU and said that pedestrian safety was a problem 25 years ago. Woods called for immediate action to his city, state and national problem. Woods personally spoke to approximately 300 students. A majority of students did not want Garfield crosswalk closed and were willing to push a button to activate flashing beacons. She thought the police were understaffed. She offered her assistance to help education students. The Commission thanked Woods for her time to talk to students and report to the Commission.

Larry Blake, 411 Briscoe Place, was the Facilities Director at SOU. He noted the unique situation of Siskiyou dividing the campus parking. He favored education and noted that the high school had similar issues. He thought sensor-activated beacons would be a waste of money. He thought technology would not provide the solution. He said that embedded LED lighting would not be noticeable in the daytime. He also thought that technology gave pedestrians a false sense of security.

#### Discussion:

Heesacker wondered if the recommended rumble streets would be affected by the snow plows. Olson said the strips were plastic and would be raised ½ inch above the asphalt; they were easily and inexpensively replaced. Warshawsky asked about noise levels for adjacent residents. Olson noted that Pine Street in Central Point had rumble strips and they are not overly loud. They were designed to be heard by drivers.

Bender asked if funds were available to install a signal at Garfield. He thought it would increase safety and wondered if the change in traffic flow would be the only disadvantage. Olson said that installing traffic signals was often seen as a "cure all." He explained that ODOT had eight warrants and one of them must be met to get a traffic signal approved. He said the Garfield Street intersection would not meet any of the warrants. He noted that the installation of a signal affects a large number of variables.

Swales noted studies that stated that marked crosswalks actually increased pedestrian/vehicle crashes and gave pedestrians a false sense of security. He suggested reducing Siskiyou from four lanes to two lanes. He favored increased street lighting.

Lemhouse, a Medford Police Officer, noted that there would still be accidents even with all the improvements. He favored increased lighting and rumble strips. His initial reaction was to close the Garfield crosswalk. His main concern was vehicles turning right from Garfield Street onto Siskiyou thus crossing through the crosswalk.

Swales asked staff if they could contact SOU about closing the northbound left hand turn into the SOU parking lot near Garfield Street. Removing this turn would allow the Garfield crosswalk to be relocated and a median refuge installed. Olson said the left hand turn pocket was installed in approximately 1985 due to pressure from SOU.

Studies of the boulevard by Kettleison recommended the current location of the medians and turn lanes.

Officer MacClennan reported that the first police “sting” would be March 12, 2008. He reminded participants that both the pedestrian and the drive must legally exercise “due care.”

Decision:

Busse moved to recommend that the City of Ashland increase the wattage in the existing cobra head lights to 150 watts from Morse Street to Frances Lane. Jackson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Lemhouse made a motion to recommend installing thermo-plastic rumble strips and pavement markings with the words “Crossing” in the south bound lanes ahead of the crosswalk at University Way and in the north bound lanes ahead of the crosswalk at Bridge Street. Busse seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Bender moved to direct staff to work with ODOT to determine if signal warrants are met at Garfield Street. Lemhouse seconded the motion. Olson said the signal would not meet state warrants. He noted that future traffic signals must be identified in the Transportation System Plan (a list of the City’s transportation projects for the next 20 years) and the Capital Improvement Project (budget). A signal at Garfield is not listed therefore the City would have to absorb the entire \$300,000 cost of the signal. Bender / Lemhouse withdrew their motion.

Warshawsky moved to direct staff to request ODOT lower the speed limit from Gresham Street to Walker Avenue from 30 mph to 25 mph. Busse seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Busse made a motion to recommend that the Garfield crosswalk temporarily remain open, but that all engineering improvements are studied for effectiveness. Lemhouse seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Lemhouse asked that the issue of long term improvements to the Siskiyou / Garfield intersection be placed on the March agenda.

Lemhouse / Bender moved / seconded to recommend installing flashing amber beacons at the crosswalks at Garfield Street and Bridge Street as quickly as possible. The beacons are to be compatible with imbedded LEDs to keep future options open. Swales said there was no statistical data that flashing beacons improve safety and that they may provide pedestrians with a false sense of security. Motion passed 7 to 1.

3. Request for One-Way Designation on the Alley Between Morton and Harrison

A majority of adjacent property owners petitioned the City to pave the last section of this four block alley. The City is generally in favor of paving alleys due to the difficulty in managing storm water drainage and dust. A neighborhood meeting was held on January 17, 2008 to discuss any concerns and requests for the proposed improvement. All opposition to the paving was based upon the belief that the paving would increase alley traffic and vehicle speeds. Neighbors contended that, following the reconfiguration of the median islands on Siskiyou Boulevard and closure of

several intersections, traffic had greatly increased on the alley. A one-way designation was unanimously recommended to reduce the “cut through” traffic.

The engineering department does not keep continuous traffic counts on alleys, but thought that traffic has increased since the Siskiyou improvements. Staff recommended that the alley be designated as a one-way alley. To help mitigate the anticipated higher speeds the following conditions were also recommended:

1. That at least two five foot modified speed humps be constructed on the alley.
2. That the alley be paved to allow the construction of the asphalt speed humps and to provide a surface for pavement arrows and other one-way traffic indicators.

Heesacker asked about the effect of the speed humps to emergency vehicles. He also noted that the road grade was elevated due to yearly graveling. Olson said alleys are not access routes for emergency vehicles and that the improvement plans would include removing six to eight inches to help with the drainage issue.

Swales lives on another section of this alley between Gresham and Sherman. He wondered why the unpaved alley was a problem. He noted that 60% of the improvement cost and future maintenance costs would be bore by the taxpayers. He stated he had a conflict of interest and would not vote on the issue. Jackson asked if there were other one way alleys, Olson said yes, including Will Dodge Way.

#### Public Testimony

Diarmuid McGuire, 696 Siskiyou, testified that the increased traffic began with the redesign of Siskiyou Boulevard which channeled traffic to the alley. He explained that traffic backed up on Morton because it is not a controlled intersection. There are nine families adjacent to the alley and five want it paved. McGuire was opposed to paving because it would divert more traffic to the alley causing a safety concern. During the neighborhood meeting it was unanimously decided that if the alley were paved, it should be made one way.

Abdol Hamid, 195 Morton, lived at this address 33 years. He agreed that the improvement of Siskiyou increased traffic on the alley. He was in favor of the proposed one-way designation.

#### Discussion:

Warshawsky wondered about the effect of the designation on bicyclists as they were required to follow the same laws as motorists. Swales thought that staff was using the request to please local residents and such a request violates the Comprehensive Plan.

#### Decision:

Lemhouse / Bender m/s to follow staff’s recommendation designating the alley between Harrison and Morton as a one-way alley with the direction of travel being in the southeasterly direction (toward Morton Street), that at least two five foot modified speed humps be constructed on the alley and that the alley be paved to allow the construction of the asphalt speed humps and to provide a surface for pavement arrows and other one-way traffic indicators. The motion would be contingent upon the alley being paved. The motion passed 5 to 1 with two abstentions. Warshawsky asked that

the Commission emails regarding this issue be attached to the minutes as part of the record.

4. Bike Safety on Oak Street  
Tabled until the next meeting.

5. ACTS Oregon Grant Allocation  
Tabled until the next meeting.

6. Bicycle & Pedestrian Issues  
None.

7. Agenda Items for Next Month

C. OTHER – None.

**NEXT MEETING DATE: March 27, 2008**

III. Adjourned 10:16 PM