

Traffic Committee

MINUTES

August 10, 2010

Committee Members

Present:

Susan Ruinen, Chair; Clyde Smith, Co-Chair; Karen Hanner, Secretary; Randy Edwards; Bob Ferrell; David McGehee; Rosemary Wilson; Sandy Paavel; Jay Daniels; Dan Walker; John Fechtel; Frank Berry; Wally Bledsoe; Rosemarie Nuzzo

Attending:

Britt Poole, Leah Youngblood, Brad Cunningham

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 AM in the Eli Mack Room by Chair Susan Ruinen.

June Minutes:

Susan Ruinen asked committee members if there were any corrections or additions to the June meeting minutes Bob Ferrell made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Rosemary Wilson seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed.

July Minutes:

Susan Ruinen asked committee members if there were any corrections or additions to the revised July meeting minutes. David McGehee made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Clyde Smith seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed.

Update:

Susan Ruinen told committee members that Hazel Tyndall and Randy Halfacre were not attending the meeting this morning. Britt Poole reported that SCDOT had looked at the Target/Travinia's area and stated that they could put in a raised concrete median but had asked for an expanded pork chop or possible realignment of the entrance at Travinia's.

Phase I Project:

Britt distributed copies of a letter from John Walsh at SCDOT regarding the Phase I Traffic Plan. (attached)

The letter refers to a meeting on July 23 attended by himself, John Walsh, Ladd Gibson, and Randy Young from SCDOT and Randy Halfacre, Ted Stambolitis and Hazel Tyndall.

Susan Ruinen referred to the Comment Summary from the Phase I Public Meeting and noted there were five comments about the median on 378, one in favor and four against. There were many more comments about the one-way pairs. Britt stated that SCDOT considered the March 29, 2010 Traffic Committee meeting as an additional public comment meeting.

David McGehee questioned that the committee was previously told traffic flow would be best with a median in place but now is told that it is not going to be done.

Susan Ruinen commented that SCDOT works with municipalities to give them what they want and will work together on a project. She doesn't like the way this one was done; to present a design and then change it. She has serious concerns about the left turns and the possibility of additional time and expense required in order to go back and fix a problem at a later date. She researched possible damage to businesses by changes to access and found no real statistics.

Susan asked the committee to formulate a recommendation for the plan such as; 1) with concrete medians, 2) as recently presented, or 3) with Right In/Right Out at the driveways.

She reminded members that the Council Meeting is Monday. She stated that she plans to attend.

Rosemary Wilson commented that this plan is allowing left turns that wouldn't work on 378 at the Publix.

Frank Berry commented that the Planning Commission encourages interconnectivity and Right In/Right Out access for any new business on 378 or US 1.

Susan Ruinen commented that SCDOT would not deny access but could restrict the type of driveway permitted with consideration of sight distances.

Bob Ferrell stated that property owners can claim damages and take the issue to court.

Clyde Smith asked the committee if they were to vote in favor of the plan with the raised medians and sent that recommendation to Town Council, would it jeopardize the project moving forward? He stated that he is a pragmatist and looks at the responsibility for the good of the Town in the long run. He said anything would be better than what we have now.

Randy Edwards commented that the letter from SCDOT leaves the issue open to be revised either way. To move forward and not install a raised median could increase the possibility of more serious accidents with traffic moving at a higher speed. When traffic is crawling, accidents are not as frequent or severe.

Jay Daniels stated that he was following up on Clyde's comments. To support the raised median and slow the process would contribute to mitigating the traffic problems. To support the plan without the raised median would leave a problem that could take years longer to correct.

Randy Edwards asked how the plan for the One Way Pairs design phase which is basically large median will ever happen.

David McGehee said traffic is already so bad he avoids the Flight Deck shopping area and if the traffic problems can't be fixed, he'll move.

Bob Ferrell commented that the committee can beat the issue to death. He stated his main concern would be that the Traffic Committee recommendation could stop this project and influence any future projects. He said that the Town wants the improvement project to move forward and he feels we should endorse the project in principle with the reservation about safety issues surrounding the median. He told the committee that many times this community has shot itself in the foot on traffic issues because they can't make a decision and have allowed a few people to kill a project. He stated the committee should find a common ground that allows moving forward without jeopardizing the entire project.

John Fechtel commented that he has seen many meetings like this one. He pointed out that every delay will increase costs on a project. He agreed that the committee should try to support the plan with a strong reservation about the changed median.

Susan Ruinen reviewed the letter from SCDOT. She said the committee knows the raised median would be a better plan.

David McGehee said it feels like caving in.

John Fechtel responded that there is always a right way, a wrong way and a political way.

Randy Edwards said with the added lane, capacity would be increased so the plan meets the intended purpose and need. He has asked to see the supporting data but hasn't seen any yet. He does not support not having the raised concrete median. He stated that saying the committee has "reservations" sounds like it is just concerned.

Susan said she very strongly feels that to put a raised median in place at a later date would cost more, look bad and is just ridiculous.

Bob Ferrell made a motion that the Traffic Committee recommends adopting the Phase One Traffic Improvement Plan in principle with serious reservations regarding elimination of the concrete medians.

Clyde Smith seconded the motion.

After discussion the yes votes: Clyde Smith, Wally Bledsoe, Frank Berry, Dan Walker, John Fechtel, Bob Ferrell and the no votes: David McGehee, Sandy Paavel, Randy Edwards, Jay Daniels, Rosemary Wilson, Susan Ruinen
The motion failed.

Rosemary Wilson made a motion that the Traffic Committee in principle supports the Phase I Traffic Improvement Plan but strongly encourages use of a raised concrete median for safety and improvement in capacity of traffic flow in the Town of Lexington.

Sandy Paavel seconded.

After discussion, the yes votes: Susan Ruinen, Rosemary Wilson, Randy Edwards, Sandy Paavel, Wally Bledsoe, Jay Daniels, Dan Walker, John Fechtel and the no votes: Bob Ferrell
The motion carried.

Wally Bledsoe asked Susan to give more notice time to changes in the meeting. Susan replied that the change was made in July and there seemed to be a problem with emails not being received at the Town addresses. Britt asked Karen to get with Josh Emory to try to correct that problem.

Randy Edwards commented that the signal timing seemed to be wrong on 378 at the intersection for the double left out of Target and also at the Walmart by Chik Fil A.

The next Traffic Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 21, 2010, at 8:00 AM in the Eli Mack Room at the Lexington Municipal Complex, 111 Maiden Lane, Lexington, SC.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Sandy Paavel, seconded by Clyde Smith with unanimous approval by members present.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Hanner, Secretary.

Approved By: _____

Susan Ruinen, Chair



South Carolina
Department of Transportation

August 6, 2010

Mayor Randall Halfacre
Town of Lexington
Post Office Box 397
Lexington, South Carolina 29071

RE: US 1/378 Intersection Improvement Project in Lexington County

Dear Mayor Halfacre:

Thank you for our July 23, 2010, meeting concerning the first phase of the Town of Lexington's Traffic Improvement Plan, US 1/378 Intersection Improvement Project. I thought our meeting was productive and needed to effectively discuss and clarify issues on this important project. I appreciate the support the Town has shown towards moving this project forward and hope that its support will continue on not only this project but on future infrastructure projects in the Town of Lexington.

During our meeting, the decision making process was discussed concerning the possible implementation of a raised median within the limits of the project. We discussed the historical timelines, involving earlier coordination with the Town in 2008 where SCDOT, with the support of the Town, was progressing towards advancing this project where the scope of work did not include a raised median. Public meetings were held and an environmental document detailing potential impacts of the project was approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on that basis. As a part of our normal project development prior to right-of-way acquisition beginning, a design field review was held on August 11, 2009. One aspect of the comments and suggestions received from design members attending that meeting included the possible benefits of implementing a raised median within the project corridor. After this design field review, several meetings were held with the Town and the public to receive comments on the possible inclusion of a raised median. At these meetings, SCDOT staff presented general information on the potential benefits of installing a raised median within a roadway corridor.

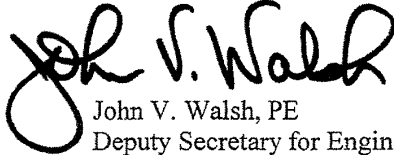
After further review of the design and evaluating the unique project constraints, such as environmental commitments, right-of-way limitations, and public input, the raised median is not planned for inclusion on the project at this time. SCDOT intends to continue its efforts to advance this project, without the raised median, to construction in accordance with all applicable federal and state guidelines. The project without the raised median originally included within the environmental document meets the purpose and need for reducing congestion and improving traffic conditions as Phase I of the larger traffic plan within the Town of Lexington. In the event future operational conditions warrant the installation of raised medians on the US 378 corridor, this location and others along the entire corridor will be reviewed at that time.



Mayor Randall Halfacre
August 6, 2010
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I trust this letter serves as sufficient follow up to our meeting to indicate the proposed path forward to advance this first phase of improvements within the Town of Lexington. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you and look forward to our continued coordination on this and future projects within the Town of Lexington. Thank you for your assistance on this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John V. Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John V. Walsh, PE
Deputy Secretary for Engineering

JVW:pcm

cc: Councilman Hazel Tyndall, Lexington County

Councilman Ted Stambolitis, Lexington County

Britt Poole, Town Administrator, Lexington County

ec: J Craig Forest, SCDOT Commissioner, Second Congressional District

Ron K. Patton, Chief Engineer for Planning, Location, and Design

File: PC/RLY

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