

MEETING NOTES

Dover City Council Transportation Advisory Committee and Public Meeting Pedestrian and Vehicle Access and Streetscape Study

Topic: Discussion of Draft Access and Streetscape Recommendations
Date: November 20, 2014
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This meeting was held to invite discussion about the recommendations and concepts that have been advanced by the consultant team preparing the evaluations, studies and designs for improvements to the downtown pedestrian and streetscape environment, including consideration of circulation and parking patterns. The meeting began with a video presentation that described the purposes of the study and summarized key recommendations that have emerged during the nearly year-long process that has included preceding workshops and discussions.

After the presentation, the participants were invited to join in break-out group discussions that were facilitated by the consultant team members representing both The Cecil Group and RSG.

The purpose of these notes is to summarize typical comments, questions and responses from among the three breakout groups. It has been compiled from the notes of the group facilitators, which have been assembled according to topics.

Observation and Comments

Vehicular Circulation and Roadway Layout

- In general, there was broad support for implementing a 2-way traffic system for central portions of the downtown along Central Avenue and Main Street. This input was reflected in specific discussions within the groups and comments made at the end of the meeting when the groups reconvened. A number of reservations and questions were raised about the 2-way system. Some were answered during the breakout groups as described below and other concerns were noted as topics to be addressed in the final report or subsequent detailed design and engineering.
- A concern was raised over the ability for emergency vehicles to by-pass traffic on Central Avenue under a two-way scenario. It was noted that the traffic signals are equipped with emergency vehicle pre-emption to automatically turn lights green to serve these vehicles as they approach.

- Some of the discussion focused on the benefits of the proposed intersection improvements that would result in a coordinated, computer-controlled traffic light system that can adapt to different times of day and help keep traffic moving properly.
- One participant noted that not all towns are moving to 2-way systems, but are retaining one-way networks in their downtowns.
- One participant raised the suggestion to tighten the radius on the southwest corner of Lower Square. It was noted that this could be done but it would likely result in the removal of the small “pork-chop” island in that corner which currently accommodates street lighting and traffic signal poles and also provides a pedestrian refuge area.
- Some attendees were concerned how the specific layout of the roundabout at 3rd and Chestnut Street would work with the train crossing. The ability to accommodate this configuration appears to be consistent with established engineering practice, and would continue to require traffic control devices to signal train crossing and stop vehicle movements at this location.
- A concern was raised over the turning radius needed for trucks turning from Main Street onto Chapel Street. This comment was noted, and the radii have been subsequently reviewed again by the consultant team as part of the overall circulation pattern to confirm that the concept layout allows for a design that would be consistent with established traffic engineering practices for large truck turns.
- The material and color of the proposed pedestrian crossings were discussed. It was explained that there are several options, but the eventual design and material will need to be “snow plow safe” and enduring.
- A suggestion was made that the street connection be restored that linked the parking area behind the Post Office to Chestnut Street. The concern was raised because of the difficulty for vehicles leaving the parking area and accessing Washington Street near an awkward intersection. A comment by City staff indicated that this connection has been removed and the property transferred to a private entity a number of years ago, and this is no longer an option for the City, but that perhaps other methods could be used to improve that situation.

Pedestrian Circulation / Safety

- There was a common theme of strong interest in improving pedestrian safety through streetscape improvements, and in better pedestrian circulation including the location, placement, and safety of crosswalks.

- Concern was raised in general about the number of mid-block crossings and in particular about safety at the crosswalk on Central Avenue just south of Second Street.
- Several comments focused on the opportunity to better connect the sidewalk network to the growing network of riverfront paths and walkways.
- Attendees discussed the safety of 1-way vs. 2-way traffic on pedestrian crossing safety. It was noted that studies indicated that pedestrians are safer crossing two-way traffic (one lane in each direction) compared with crossing two lanes of one-way traffic. It was also noted that part of the intent of two-way streets is often to slow traffic by removing long stretches of one-way traffic that tend to move more rapidly.
- It was also noted that the proposed improvements include tightening up intersections which reduce the amount of time pedestrians are in the roadway and also reduces the pedestrian crossing times to improve traffic safety.
- Concerns were discussed about the long length of the pedestrian crossing at Main Street and Washington Street. The potential need for a traffic light in this location was discussed and the comment noted.
- Concern was expressed about sidewalks that would have brick as the walking surface. The specific concern was that brick walkways seem to become uneven over time creating hazardous conditions and accessibility issues. It was noted that many older brick sidewalks were constructed in a different manner than modern techniques and that there are several construction methods that can prevent this impact.

Existing Business Impact

- Concern was raised over the potential for the visibility of storefront signs on the east side of Upper Square to be blocked by the proposed new trees. It was noted that the City will limb up the trees to an adequate height to ensure visibility from the street.
- Several participants underlined the importance of better signage to provide wayfinding and directions to destinations in the downtown.

Bicycle Circulation

- There were concerns about how bicycle circulation would be accommodated throughout the plan. It was noted that the proposed improvements would slow overall traffic speeds, which would make sharing lanes with vehicles much safer. It was also noted that there would be future opportunities to include bike lanes on specific sections of roadways.

- One participant and bicyclist noted their support for a circulation solution that does not provide for on-street bike lanes in the downtown because they could be potentially unsafe and more hazardous than off-street solutions or shared lanes.

Street Trees and Landscape

- There was interest in the locations and types of street trees that would be used. It was noted that the intent would be to remove street trees that were in poor condition and place new street trees where there were opportunities. The result would be street trees of varying age and species that are appropriated to their immediate context.