

MINUTES
PRINCETON TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
September 9, 2013
Community Meeting Room A
Witherspoon Municipal Building

Present: Robert Altman, Kristen Appelget (Princeton University liaison), Murali Balasubramanian, Jo Butler (Council liaison), Pamela Hersh, Robert Kiser (staff liaison), Anton Lahnston (Chair), Sgt. Tom Murray (police department liaison), Marvin Reed (Planning Board liaison), Surinder Sharma, Jack West (staff liaison), and Ralph Widner. **Absent:** Jan Weinberg. **Guests:** Kevin Wilkes (Chair, Alexander Street/University Place Task Force); James Constantine, planning adviser; Michael and Unia Oliver, owners of Skillman Furniture; Audelle Harvey, of 214 Witherspoon Street; and Dan Rappaport.

Chairman Anton Lahnston convened the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

Approval on Minutes of Previous Meeting

1. Robert Altman moved approval of the Minutes for the June 10, 2013 meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Briefing on Work of the ASUP Task Force

2. Anton Lahnston then asked Kevin Wilkes, chair of the Alexander Street/University Place (ASUP) Task Force, to update the committee on the work of the task force and its current status

Kevin Wilkes said the task force, organized and funded under a Memorandum of Agreement between the municipality and Princeton University, consists of six members appointed by Council and the university. Its mission is to develop a blueprint for the future of transit in the Alexander Street corridor and to explore larger traffic questions related to major current and forthcoming development projects in the community's core. Among other questions, it is exploring the feasibility of extending Dinky service to Nassau Street. He said the task force is about 40 percent of the way through its work.

A consultant, AECOM, was retained to model the potential town-wide traffic impacts of major current and impending development projects and to develop various scenarios. To date, the Task Force has examined scenarios that involve closing and pedestrianizing various streets, such as the block between Alexander and Nassau on Mercer Street, and the block between Nassau and Spring Street on Witherspoon. The Task Force has ruled out several of the proposals. Kevin Wilkes said that, while the task force is focused on the Alexander corridor, it may ask AECOM to produce scenarios for the Vandeventer/Washington intersection on Nassau if funds are

available. Kristen Appelget cautioned that the mission is to focus on Alexander and that the work should not stray too far afield from that.

A \$500,000 Trust Fund was created to meet some undefined traffic and transportation-related needs in which there is a joint community-university interest. The trustees have not identified any specific uses for these funds to date.

Kevin Wilkes then went on to describe the task force's work on transit. He said that the task force has ruled out consideration of "customized or personal transit" and has asked the consultant, URS, to evaluate the feasibility of rail transit or a combination system that would afford a "one-seat ride" between Princeton Junction and downtown Princeton. Light rail/street car technologies are to be included in this exploration. He said the basic priority is to respect traffic between downtown and Princeton Junction, but that URS has been asked to look beyond that to identify options that serve a more diverse, larger set of users.

Kristen Appelget commented that the ability to design an Alexander corridor system that would significantly reduce automobile traffic in the town is limited because so much of the town's traffic is traveling through.

Anton Lahnston asked whether the two consultants are integrating their work, or are aware of each other's proposals. Kevin Wilkes responded that they were and that this was particularly necessary in connection with rights-of-way issues in which transit might interfere with other traffic.

Construction of Arts and Transit District

3. The chair then asked Kristen Appelget to update the committee on traffic management related to construction of the new Arts and Transit District on Alexander. She reported that the temporary Dinky Station began operations recently and that she has spent a considerable amount of time monitoring how parkers and riders respond to the new conditions, tweaking the set up as she and others from the university monitor rider responses.

She said that the Tiger Transit bus schedules are timed to coincide with the accustomed Dinky schedules even though it takes the shuttle buses longer to make the trip between Princeton Junction and the temporary station on Alexander. She reported that 1600 riders used the new bus shuttle system during the first days of the relocation and that the FreeB commuter service is integrating well.

Marvin Reed reported that there has been a significant jump in FreeB ridership as a result of the new schedules and routes and suggested that committee members view the new town website which shows consolidated transit schedules.

Kristen Appelget added that signage has proven critical to get parkers and riders to the right locations. Signs aimed at morning commuters rushing to catch a train are not particularly effective. They work better if aimed at commuters returning in the evening because they are in less of a hurry.

Anton Lahnston asked about usage of the station parking lot. Kristen Appelget responded that the lot is bigger than the old one. Many spaces not yet metered by the municipality are open for free parking. Despite that, many parkers are not using the lot.

Michael and Unia Oliver complained that many commuters are parking on Alexander instead, making it impossible for customers of Skillman Furniture to find a spot. In addition, they said, many riders seem to be unaware that rest rooms are available at the temporary station and come in and ask if they can use facilities in the store.

It was agreed that Bob Kiser and Jack West, in concert with the university and police department, would take a look at the situation and see whether improved signage or other measures can be taken to direct commuting drivers into the lot and off the street more effectively. In addition, Kristen Appelget offered to try and make it clear to riders that restrooms are available at the station.

Installation of Bus Shelters

- 4. The chair than asked Pam Hersh and Bob Kiser for an update on the initiative to install bus shelters. Bob Kiser reported that NJ Transit has provided a list of the most heavily used of the 92 bus stops in town. They are—

1. Nassau EB at Witherspoon	9. US 206 NB at Library PL.	17. Witherspoon NB at Shirley
2. Nassau EB at Charlton	10. US 206 SB at Library	18. Witherspoon NB at Clay
3. Nassau EB at Olden	11. Sassafras Row at Holly House	19. Witherspoon NB at Henry
4. Nassau EB at Murray	12. Karl Light Blvd. at Mulberry Row	20. Witherspoon SB at Henry
5. Nassau WB at Murray	13. Griggs Drive at Livingston	21. Witherspoon SB at Franklin
6. Nassau WB at Moran	14. Redding Circle at Mt. Lucas	22. Witherspoon SB at McClean
7. Nassau WB at Moore	15. University Pl. at Dinky Sta. (old)	23. Witherspoon SB at Green
8. Nassau WB at Palmer Sq.	16. Witherspoon NB at Hulfish	Shopping Center (private)

Pam Hersh said that the next step is to recommend at the next meeting the stops where bus shelters should be installed. However, it is essential to coordinate the presently uncoordinated stops used by NJ Transit, the FreeB, Tiger Transit, and the private carriers. Marvin Reed is at work on that matter. Robert Altman asked if we have the authority to coordinate bus stops among the providers. Bob Kiser said that the municipality has the power to do so.

Pam Hersh went on to say that it is also necessary to agree on the design of the shelters and how to finance maintenance costs. If we use the standard designs provided by NJ Transit, the shelters are free, but the designs are uninspired and there is no provision for advertising to help underwrite

maintenance costs. NJ Transit will only install its own shelters. If we opt for non-standard designs, the community must install them. A sheet showing the standard bus shelters offered by NJ Transit is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

She was asked whether the municipality could receive an allocation of funds from the state as a contribution toward installation of shelters other than those offered by NJ Transit. She said she did not know. She and Bob Kiser will try to find out.

Jim Constantine suggested that people in Princeton would be receptive to more inspired, customized designs than those offered by the state. He showed slides of shelters in other communities. Daniel Rappaport offered his own pictures of shelters in Metuchen and elsewhere.

Marvin Reed said that whatever designs are selected should replace already existing shelters on Harrison and at other locations in town. Bob Kiser agreed. Kevin Wilkes suggested that the designs should vary.

Anton Lahnston asked if the shelters could be installed in phases. Pam Hersh responded that she did not think that was a good idea. The objective is to meet the needs of users and encourage transit use. A piecemeal approach would not meet that objective.

Robert Altman opined that, while there is some sensitivity about advertising, shelter ads would be a way to finance maintenance. The advertising need not be obtrusive. It is used in many communities just as sensitive to their environment. In response to a question, Jim Constantine estimated that maintenance costs about \$1000 per year per shelter and that advertising is often used to fund it.

Bob Kiser pointed out that because Nassau Street is part of the Lincoln Highway Historic District, whatever we propose must be approved by the state.

Chairman Lahnston requested Pam Hersh to spell out the next steps. It was agreed that (1) she and Bob Kiser would recommend shelter sites at the next meeting; (2) they would then develop recommendations concerning design and funding; (3) once the committee agrees on recommendations, these will be taken to Council.

Police Department Reports

5. Sgt. Tom Murray submitted the Police Department reports for June and July. These are appended to and made a part of these minutes. He added that the report for August was not yet completed and would be submitted at the October meeting.

In June there were 79 motor vehicle accidents, 12 with injuries, two with bicyclists, and one with deer. There were also seven arrests for driving while intoxicated and 36 for using a cell phone while driving. In July 86 accidents occurred, nine involving injuries, one with a bicyclist, and one with a deer. No report was filed for seven accidents.

In all three accidents with bicyclists during the two months, the bicyclist was at least partially at fault for either turning into the path of a motor vehicle or riding into a crosswalk while mounted. All three were behaviorally related, but one was also caused in part because of sightline obstructions at the intersection.

Sgt. Murray summarized the many safety education events in which the department has engaged recently. *Town Topics* ran a very good article on teen texting. He pointed out that New York is taking a hard look at whether fines alone are sufficient to reduce texting and the use of cell phones while driving. They have about reached the conclusion that a second offense should result in a more severe and effective penalty than simply a monetary one. Texting has proved to be more dangerous than DUI.

There are 46 school crossings and he has conducted intensive training programs for crossing guards. He reported a great session with the Witherspoon neighborhood the previous Saturday about safety at a number of school crossings, particularly Olden, Mt. Lucas, and John Street. He added that the department undertook a special monitoring program in response to citizen complaints about speeding on Witherspoon. The study found that the average speed was 19.2 mph and that the highest was 26 mph. Frequently, complaints about speeding are really about volume.

He said that tests of a new message board on Valley Road seemed to indicate that its size is too obtrusive, so an alternative will be considered.

Councilwoman Jo Butler remarked on the traffic behavior of many newcomers to town here for the opening of the academic year. She said that they were clearly oblivious to traffic rules and she asked if there were police foot patrols downtown during this period. Sgt. Murray responded that there were patrols at random times. Councilwoman Butler said that maybe we should post prominent signs about traffic rules at all the critical crosswalks on downtown Nassau Street.

Jack West added that preliminary reactions from NJDOT were negative about curb bump outs to improve traffic safety for the Washington/Vandeventer intersection with Nassau.

Public Comments

6. Ms. Audell Harvey, of 214 Witherspoon Street, asked whether there is a parking plan for the municipality. She said she lives in a home with no off-street parking and is unable to park on the street because it is metered and parking is forbidden at night. Sgt. Murray asked if she had applied for a space in the Maclean lot. She said she had, but was on a waiting list. Councilwoman Butler suggested that we take a look at parking for residents in the whole area on lower Witherspoon, given the impending redevelopment of the hospital site. Marvin Reed and Sgt. Murray pointed out there are provisions and procedures in place to provide parking for residents without driveways in that neighborhood.

The chairman asked Sgt. Murray to follow up and see what can be done to help Ms. Harvey.

An “App” for Resident Input

7. Murali Balasubramanian reported that he was still pursuing possibilities to develop an “app” for resident input to engineering and the police. This prompted several committee members to point out that apps are now available to track NJ Transit bus locations and schedules.

T & T Subcommittee Report

8. Jack West and Bob Kiser quickly summarized a number of actions taken by the Traffic and Transportation subcommittee to deal with various traffic issues—
 - A firm will be retained to do an independent speed analysis on Terhune.
 - To ensure caution by motorists approaching the sharp curve on Cherry Valley Road, three high and wide arrow signs will be installed, along with rumble strips in the roadway.
 - Discussions are progressing regarding crosswalks and striping on US 206 at the Merwick/Stanworth site.

The meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ralph R. Widner
Secretary

**MONTHLY PRINCETON ACCIDENT SUMMARY TO DATE
2010-2013**

Total Accidents Involving Motor Vehicles, Pedestrians and Bikers, Jan -July

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
2010	85	96	91	94	96	108	88
2011	146	118	83	85	99	88	100
2012	77	91	81	75	112	100	74
2013	77	91	67	79	83	79	86

Total Persons Injured in Accidents, Jan -May

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
2010	5	11	8	18	9	7	7
2011	11	7	14	8	8	6	16
2012	7	14	11	9	16	9	8
2013	5	10	6	7	7	10	9

Total Motor Vehicle Accidents Involving Pedestrians, Jan -May

Pedestrian Accidents	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
2010	0	1	0	3	1	1	0
2011	0	2	1	1	0	1	4
2012	0	5	0	1	1	1	1
2013	3	1	2 (one death)	1*	3	0	0

* One Bicycle/pedestrian accident (no mva)

Total Motor Vehicle Accidents Involving Bicycles, Jan -May

Bicycle Accidents	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
2010	0	2	0	2	1	1	0
2011	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2012	0	0	0	0	2	3	0
2013	3	1	0	2*	1	2	1

* One Bicycle/pedestrian accident (no mva)

Cause of Bicycle/Pedestrian Accident, 2013

	April	May	June	July
Pedestrian Accidents				
<i>Engineering</i>				
<i>Behavior</i>	1	3	0	0
Bicycle Accidents				
<i>Engineering</i>			.5	
<i>Behavior</i>	2	1	1.5	1

Motor Vehicle Accidents with Deer

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
2013	3	2	3	0	2	1	1

Total Citations for Speeding

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
2013	131	116	67	84	50	57	65

Total Citations for Cell Phone Use While Driving

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
2013	50	64	46	35	34	36	37

Total Citations for Not Wearing Seatbelts

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
2013	10	13	12	15	70	21	16