

Brookings Transportation Steering Committee
November 17, 2014

The Brookings Transportation Steering Committee meeting was held at 3:00 p.m. on Monday, November 17, 2014 at Brookings City & County Government Center with the following members present: Keith Corbett, Daryl Englund, Jacob Mills, Michael Bartley, Jason Harms, Jim Morgan, Les Rowland and Al Baker. Bob Hill was absent. Others present included: City Manager Jeff Weldon and Communications Specialist Laurie Carruthers. Chair Corbett called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

Approval of minutes. Motion made by Mills, seconded by Morgan, to approve the October 20, 2014 minutes. All present voted yes, motion carried.

Consideration and committee recommendation regarding Highway 14, Main Avenue to Medary Avenue Project. Corbett reminded everyone the tasks the Transportation Steering Committee was assigned by the City Council within the Charter. Brandon Riss from the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) presented and advised the portion of Highway 14 from Western Avenue to Main Avenue was reconstructed in 2013. Now, the SDDOT is preparing to reconstruct Main Avenue to Medary Avenue in 2018. The SDDOT has right-of-way in this section from 93.7' to 80' for the width of the street. The SDDOT needs to address key issue with the configuration and has researched the number of accidents. To alleviate this issue, they will be installing a 5-lane road with a turn lane. The SDDOT is requesting the Brookings Transportation Steering Committee help them determine the outside lane width, 14' or 11'. Harms asked about the rear-end crash statistics. Riss advised it is three times higher in this section compared to similar sections. Mills inquired about the width and questioned if 22nd Avenue is comparable. Riss advised that the portion of Highway 14 from Western Avenue to Main Avenue is comparable with a 14' outside lane. From Medary Avenue to 22nd Avenue, the lanes are 11' wide. Weldon questioned the impact of the boulevard. Riss directed the section from 8th Avenue to Medary would have a very narrow or no boulevard. If a boulevard is less than 5', it is not worth planting grass. He also advised the trees in the right-of-way are not likely to survive. If the lanes are constructed at the 14' width to accommodate a bike lane, the SDDOT will not paint and strip this bike lane. That would be left to the city. Morgan questioned if Brookings went with the 11' outside lane, would we be in a bind due to the shift in 14' preference. Riss advised no, there would not be a problem. Harms asked where the utilities are located. Riss advised the water and sanitary sewer are located under the road separated by 10'. Storm sewer is located in the curb and gutter, again separated by 10' from the water and sanitary sewer.

Rowland arrived at 3:26 pm.

Riss said that with the 14' outside lane, the extra room is intended for a commuter bicyclist. Corbett questioned if there is any data showing 11' outside lanes slow down traffic. Riss advised no. Riss continued that the SDDOT wants to meet today in order to continue the design for 2018 construction. Once the design has been made, it will go through design inspections, which will check all elements of the road. Then the design will be sent to the right-of-way experts. Public meetings and land owner meetings will occur in the spring of 2015. Then the project will go through construction easements and right-of-way purchases. Harms inquired about lighting and trees. Riss replied that the SDDOT will provide the standard lighting; however, they will not be involved with the planting of trees. If the city wants to go beyond the standard, the city would need to cover those costs. Harms asked about the cost of upgrades. Weldon replied that the city is looking into upgrades for the Highway 14 from 22nd Avenue

to 34th Avenue and is still waiting on cost estimates. Weldon estimates it would be up to one-third above the standard cost. Weldon also advised the city has an aggressive reforestation plan. Much more than planting a tree needs to be considered, including research of underground electrical and root development. More mature trees have less of a chance for successful growth compared to smaller trees. You are not gaining anything by planting a larger tree. Morgan asked about the cost of options. Riss replied that the difference between the 2 5-lane options is less than \$100,000. Regarding the 4 lane option, Riss cannot comment because the SDDOT has not addressed this option due to safety concerns. Regarding the 3-lane option, the turn lane does address the rear-end accidents concern. However, the termination of 2 lanes will greatly increase traffic back-ups and create longer wait times. Weldon asked about the traffic counts. Riss advised the traffic count in 2013 was 11,500; projected for 2033 is 14,600. Weldon questioned if there is any difference between the east or west bound traffic on this section. Riss answered that the SDDOT has not noticed a difference. Morgan inquired further on this issue due to the lack of industry in this area. Riss replied that many of the peak travel times are due to residents driving home or travelling to businesses on Main Avenue. Harms asked what is the boulevard minimum width. Riss answered 5' of grass boulevard with a 5' sidewalk. In some sections it is less than 5'. When this occurs there is a 6' minimum curbside sidewalk to allow for plowing of snow. If you gain the 3' from 14' outside lanes to 11' lanes, you would gain an extra 3' for the boulevard.

Baker arrived at 3:55 pm.

Public Comment:

Doug Smith: *He uses the street, but does not live in the area. He would like to see the streets as wide as possible to allow for bike lanes.*

Don Nash: *He has concerns about the project. The road is 50 years old and needs reconstruction. We need 5 lanes for safety and the trees cannot be saved.*

Tom Bare: *He requested a copy of the accident study. He believes 5 lanes will speed up traffic. He is concerned with snow removal on a curbside sidewalk. Look at 22nd Avenue – how do the residents keep their sidewalks clean?*

Dave Bertelson: *He reminded the committee has influence, but not power. The committee has been asked to influence the design.*

Phyllis Cole-Dai and Lawrence Novotny: *Novotny handed out a letter and petition from Cole-Dai, Novotny and Fishback. They propose 6th Street between Main Avenue and Medary Avenue not be widened. However, it appears this decision has already been made. This is the first time they have heard about the decision and feel the community had no input on this decision. Traffic safety should be the number one pursuit. There is less than one accident per month in this corridor. They request more information on this decision.*

Betty Gerberding: *She asked the committee to look at the City of Sturgis and the SDDOT.*

Jeanette Bare: *She inquired if the committee had reviewed the comments from the April 28, 2014 DOT meeting. Members replied yes. Bare wondered if any other options would be considered (flashing lights/stop signs).*

Tom Dobbs: He does not want to see the beauty of this section of town lost by the widening of the street. He dreads driving on 22nd Avenue. SDSU is closing streets all over campus. He asked everyone to slow down and enjoy the ambiance of this section of town and choose the 3-lane option.

Van Fishback: He inquired if the State is still interested in turning back 6th Street to the city and asked what happened to Highway 77 when it was turned back to the city. He asked the committee to look at the influence of Brookings as a whole. He wants to see the central Brookings ambiance maintained.

Ken Nelson: He agrees with the SDDOT's proposal.

Pat Fishback: She is confused how the discussion turned into only a 5-lane street. Has any research been performed on other communities? She encouraged the committee to look at Madison, Wisconsin. They have many examples of 3-lane roads. What is the timeline for this decision?

Mary Bibby: She advised that many community members are concerned with the ambiance and the trees. Would it be possible to take less boulevard and have 11' outside lanes?

Jeff Senst from the SDDOT spoke on the subject. He advised the study focused on safety. The accident rate for this section of Highway 14 is 7.69 compared to 2.58 with other sections similar to this one. With the accident study they did not research the reasons for the accidents. Out of a total of 53 crashes, 45 were not in the Medary Avenue intersection. Of those 45, 23 were rear-end accidents. The SDDOT is installing an additional lane for safety. The SDDOT would not propose an unsafe plan. The question for the committee is 14' outside lane or 11'. They are not expecting a decision today. Corbett asked if the only answer the SDDOT is requesting from the committee is 14' or 11' outside lanes. Senst answered yes. If the committee decides on 11' outside lanes, there would be 3' extra for the boulevard. Senst advised that the SDDOT cannot in a good faith effort reconstruct this section in 3 or 4 lanes.

Morgan asked if the queue length study is available. Senst showed the study and advised that queue lengths measure the back-up of traffic at a stoplight. If this section of Highway 14 was reduced to 3 lanes, the queue lengths would increase dramatically and citizens would be waiting over a city block in order to travel through the intersection in peak traffic times. Not to mention the traffic frenzy and accident probability when reducing from two lanes to one lane. Englund asked if the SDDOT had any discussions about 4 lanes with no left turns. Senst replied that the only way to make this work would be to convert the turning lane to a median and take up the entire lane. Ultimately, the storm sewer, sanitary sewer and water need to be upsized due to the growing community.

Rowland asked the committee if we have all the information. What is the difference between the traffic counts going west and east? Senst replied that nothing would be gained out of an origin/destination study, only a delay in the project.

An inquiry about the status of the 7th Avenue stoplight came up. Riss replied that traffic light counts have been taken, but they are still studying. If they do change it, it would be flashing red/yellow for 90 days before any action is taken.

Englund questioned if the committee could digest the information and meet again in a few weeks. Senst advised that yes; that would be fine. He would like to see the committee have an open and honest

conversation on the matter and look to the greater good. The bid letting is scheduled for February 2018. This sounds like a long time away, but they will need a decision soon regarding the width in order to proceed on the project.

Corbett asked the committee if they would like time to think. Bartley answered yes, the committee needs time to discuss this item. Bartley advised the public wants more options and made several suggestions: rethink the snow removal process and clear the snow to the middle of the street, then remove; obtain extra right-of-way from the property owners and move sidewalks back to make up the distance; use decorative lighting; curve the sidewalks. Harms responded that the committee should look the options over. Weldon commented that the committee is aware of the SDDOT's plans and needs to timely respond. Brookings just had another SDDOT project lose funding to another city. Corbett advised the committee needs to have their recommendation approved by the City Council before the end of the year. Carruthers will schedule a follow-up meeting in the next few weeks. Senst requested all inquiries come through Jeff Weldon.

Adjourn. A motion was made by Mills, seconded by Bartley to adjourn. All present voted yes; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Submitted by Laurie Carruthers.