

LPCA Meeting Highlights - March 12, 2014

Note: Regular Lyon Park business was conducted in the half hour before the joint meeting, but the Secretary, Kathleen McSweeney, was not able to attend. The Secretary will try to obtain notes from those in attendance.

The joint Lyon Park/Ashton Heights meeting on traffic safety began at 7:30 pm. LPCA President, John Goldner, indicated that tonight's topic about pedestrian and vehicular safety was a result of the conversations on the listserv over the past month, and coincided with the death of an APS parent at Tuckahoe, and the incident with a parent with a baby carriage being hit at 10th and N Highland. Scott Sklar echoed the concerns from all angles.

This meeting is the start of an ongoing dialogue, and the community associations will work together to find solutions.

Panel:

Kyle Lucas, safe routes to Schools coordinator

Stephanie Taylor, Transportation Engineer and Operations

Rich Viola, Transportation Planning Dupervisor

Tim McIntosh, Transportation Planner from CPHD

Jay Fiset, Chairman, County Board

Jay started the conversation. He mentioned the death of the mother at Nottingham, and noted that we don't know whether speeding was the issue or not. There have been no conclusions. When Jay joined the board 16 years ago, people wanted stop signs at every intersection, but studies had shown that it doesn't work for many intersections. A lot of energy has been put into neighborhood conservation and safe routes to schools. He indicated that before he was elected, he was a different kind of driver, and he has become more attuned to pedestrian and safety issues in his time on the board. Nubs, curb cuts and other solutions that expand the pedestrian islands make things safer. Smart technology to delay traffic is also integrated, and we don't see as many right turn on reds being allowed for safety reasons. The whole area of pedestrian safety has led to a lot of education, and Jay mentioned the PALs initiative.

As we move to the concept of complete streets, all safety aspects and the activities occurring in the right of way are being considered and more awareness is required. Neighborhood traffic calming task force was formed several years back. It was citizen-led with options and measures documented as tools to address specific issues. The traffic calming tools are part of the operating budget, and the largest issues are addressed first. It has been adjusted over the years, but there has been some push back from neighborhoods about some of the tools, like speed humps. With the fact that most of the serious issues have been dealt with, the Board has de-funded it and has been replaced with a committee focusing on complete streets.

John then asked MS. Taylor to speak about her program. Her group looks at street plats and studies proposals to ensure plans conform to national and state standards, as well as the concerns of neighbors. They mostly do spot improvements. How do they receive input on where spot improvements should be done? They receive concerns from residents via phone, email, facebook, etc. They assess all requests and do a study to determine what measures should be taken. There is an install team that then puts the solution in place.

Mr. Viola's group works with the planning process, like site plans, to look at sidewalk widths, driveways, streets, cross-sections and assess pedestrian safety. They also work directly with communities when the County Board or the manager make specific requests. They did some safe routes to schools projects related to safety around Long Branch elementary a few years ago. Lyon Park does have some residual funding for a few local projects, about \$45K.

Mr. McIntosh then spoke about the projects and partner on complete streets. Projects come from the neighborhoods, centered around the neighborhood conservation plan that each civic association works on. They are available to continue to work directly with communities to define projects.

Mr. Lucas is in a new position that encompasses education for students and planning. The transportation survey earlier this school year informs what his office does.

John Goldner opened up the conversation to questions. First question: how do we address areas, like Arlington Blvd and Pershing, where cars are flying off the highway into a residential neighborhood street? They look at existing traffic calming and assess the efficacy, and then layer additional tools when needed.

Question: No left turns from Wilson onto neighborhood streets – why? It seems that it would be safer to have some left turn signals. What are the tools available?

Question: How do we get our concerns met when things happen? Contact County staff. They are interested in trying out innovative measures like flashing beacons, as long as we own the road. We can do it other places, but will have to ask the state for permission on some roads. Where do we call? Call DES, general transportation. They can get you to the right person.

John commented that there do seem to be some hot spots along Washington Blvd, Pershing and Washington Blvd. Is there any precedent to look holistically at an entire area? Yes, they tend to look at arterials and have a special program to do exactly this. Washington Blvd and Pershing are on their list, but may take a couple of years. Can't rebuild the street, but will look at what is needed globally.

An observation was made that there has been some balkanization, because projects have been done on either side of some neighbors, but they were never reached out to or involved. Why? Can this be rectified so there is a more balanced approach, especially to include contiguous neighbors? Question about where "contiguous" stops – how is nearby defined and where do you draw the line? A lot of time there is not a logical end.

Natalie mentioned that our community is stretched to update our NC document. Can't the County help us write it? John confirmed that we have struggled with it as a community. Staff is assigned to assist but traditionally communities take the lead on creating it.

What is the lowest speed at which we could get a speed camera or to get speed limits reduced? We go as low as 25 miles an hour. The code of Virginia and the Arlington County code will allow us to go as low as 15 mph around a curb, but they don't do it on regular streets.

The NC process can pit street against street and neighbor against neighbor. Recent issues have been costs, especially the new stormwater runoff requirements. The County should meet a basic level in terms of administering safe streets. Should have an inventory of incomplete streets and sidewalks and start working through it, using it as a tool to install projects. They do have one called the Neighborhood Infrastructure plan and highlights sidewalks and streets that need to be addressed. What department is responsible for going through and replacing the sidewalks then? There are depts. responsible for it and they are addressed as funded. They collect pedestrian issues, broken sidewalks and map it to review in conjunction with the capital improvement program.

Several speakers concurred that fixing the broken or missing sidewalks are an issue. Sometimes the home developers don't do a great job with sidewalks or utilities.

Jay closed out by thanking everyone for the interesting discussion. The neighborhood roads are very different now than they were 27 years ago when he moved in. There have been many changes and there will continue to be change as we grow.

Question about how to integrate safe walk to schools program with the larger county transportation planning. Kyle mentioned that Ashton Heights resident Nancy Van Doren (who was present at the meeting) is part of the MMTSSC and there are some terrific recommendations coming out of the group. Kyle mentioned that walking school buses are a great option for some neighborhoods. How does SRS work with County staff to determine safe routes? APS does create transportation maps with routes for all modes of transportation. He works closely with Stephanie's group and passes along issues that are raised. He encourages neighbors to contact him with school transit issues.

Nancy mentioned that the MMTSSC committee has recommended a shortened walk zone for APS: 1 mile for high school, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile for middle school and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile for elementary. Another participant suggested that the civic associations write a letter supporting this change, and sending it to the school board. The school board will be considering the recommended changes in the next couple of months.

John and Scott thanked the County staff for attending our meeting and vowed to continue the conversation.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Kathleen McSweeney, LPCA Secretary