

CITY OF STEVENSON TOWN HALL MEETING MINUTES
June 11, 2015
6:00 p.m., Hegewald Center

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Frank Cox, Scott Anderson, Monica Masco, Julie Mayfield, Amy Weissfeld

STAFF PRESENT: Nick Hogan, Eric Hansen, Ben Shumaker, Carla Cosentino

GUESTS: Casey Roeder, Larry Krug, Dave & Kathy McKenzie, Coby Wright, Charlie Bailey, Glenn Morris, Jeff Carlson, Mary Repar, Phillip Watness, Ben & Vickie Sciacca, Karen Ashley, Karen Ditzler, Angie Hollis, Bernard Versari, DOT reps Chad Hancock and David Berkey, Ronnie Chandler, Phil Ginter, Colleen Kelly Ginter, Libby Johnson, Craig Klever, Melissa Still, Ron Chandra, Carl Schilt, Bob & Barbara Robinson, Linda & Nate Lee

MODERATOR: Dena Marshall

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 PM. Introductions of staff and council

INTRODUCTION OF MODERATOR: Mayor Cox introduced moderator Dena Marshall.

PURPOSE AND GROUND RULES: Moderator Dena Marshall explained procedural rules for the meeting and reviewed its purpose: to take comment on whether to designate First Street as an optional bypass route for eastbound traffic and whether to remove the stop sign. Individuals would be called upon in the order of the sign in sheet, and testimony would be limited to 3 minutes each. Questions would be compiled and answered later.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION AND ITEMS UNDER CONSIDERATION: City Administrator Nick Hogan summarized actions taken since the topic was addressed a year ago and items under current consideration for improving traffic and pedestrian safety in downtown Stevenson.

- Installed radar feedback signs; results effective, but perhaps not welcoming
- Handheld pedestrian crossing flags
- Re-painted the crosswalks
- Increased SCSO enforcement of downtown traffic

The only large option remaining from last year's workshop is removing the stop sign at 1st & Russell.

- A survey was conducted with 175 responses
 - 10% of respondents thought the actions taken so far seem to be helping and are adequate. 15% thought traffic was no worse than other small cities. 75% thought it is still a problem.
 - 81% thought 1st Street should be designated as an optional route; 19% thought it should not.
 - 70% thought the stop sign at 1st & Russell should be removed; 30% thought it should not.
 - Copies of other suggestions submitted are available for review.

- DKS, a professional traffic engineering firm, prepared an intersection analysis about removal of the stop sign where they examined safety, traffic flow, and pedestrian movement and concluded:
 - The intersection has only experienced one collision, property damage only (no bodily injury collisions).
 - The route would only be attractive to eastbound traffic (would not likely be used westbound).
 - Speeds may increase without the stop sign, which may require additional traffic calming measures.
 - Existing intersection does not meet any of the warrants for a 4-way stop; the stop sign could be removed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Phil Ginter - will eastbound and westbound traffic be one way?

Colleen Kelly Ginter – what is the necessity for removing the stop sign? No reason trucks couldn't stop.

Glenn Morris – a volunteer fire fighter; both the fire department and EMS oppose the stop sign removal for safety reasons. Vehicles need to back into the shops; this would be dangerous without the stop sign. Encourage East bound truck traffic on First Street; Second St is too narrow for side by side trucks. If the stop sign is removed, there should be a flashing light for the crosswalk. Volunteers responding to the fire hall and ambulance hall will be at risk if the stop sign is removed. If the belief is that a sign would be effective for encouraging truck traffic on the alternate route, different speed limits might also do so. Appreciates increased law enforcement traffic enforcement. Stressed importance of safety for pedestrians accessing the waterfront and for emergency service volunteers.

DS Miller - if 80% of survey respondents favor 2 one way streets, what grounds are there for opposing the 2 one-way streets? A stop light at both 1st and 2nd would solve the problem.

Libby Johnson: 30 year resident two blocks from the stop sign on First Street. Vehicles are speeding now; Sheriff has told her First will become a speedway if stop sign is removed. Opposes removing the stop sign. What will be done to control speeds if the stop sign is removed? Irked that First Street is not recognized as part of "downtown." No improvements have been made to slow traffic on First. Appreciates SCSO enforcement. Consider both streets when having conversations about "downtown."

Craig Clever: First Street resident. First is a residential street. If designated an alternative route, add another traffic device at Columbia to slow traffic. The influx of truck traffic might be tolerable if drivers obey the speed limit. Trucks are parking overnight using the street as if it were a truck stop. If the stop sign is removed, install flashing lights at both the Russell & Columbia intersections. Opposes removing the stop sign. Can there be traffic calming measures on Columbia & First streets?

Bernard Versari: opposes removing stop sign. Encourage walkability to connect 1st and 2nd streets to waterfront. Removal would increase pedestrian risk. Consider radar tickets; get photo enforcement to control speeding.

Dave McKenzie: Is the suggestion to create a one-way alternate route eastbound? **Hogan** responded that the City is not considering one way streets at this time. Under current consideration is whether to encourage eastbound traffic to use First Street. Will trucks be encouraged or mandated to use the

bypass? **Cox** said removing the stop sign would create an incentive to use First.

Charlie Bailey: The stop sign on First discourages truck use. Add crosswalks to 1st like there are on 2nd. Trucks on Second Street are a hazard. Suggested speed bumps. Shift some of the traffic from Second Street to First to neutralize. Add radar ticketing device. Install a blinking light for emergency services.

Dena Marshall: noted that blinking lights at the intersection, speed radar or speed traps, and speed bumps are acknowledged suggestions.

Ben Sciacca: Read his statement; 20 years ago 1st St was built to meet a community need but the voices of a few have led to its lack of use. Residents/visitors outside of 1st Street have not been recognized. Council has said the residents of First Street are opposed. Consider needs of the community over the vocal opposition of a few. The survey results overwhelmingly say to do this. Safety is a concern; fatalities will come. Ask the state to help control traffic.

Mary Repar: How many people use the post office and how many tour boat visitors are there? Pedestrians are at risk. Opposes removing the stop sign. Wants a walkable, pedestrian friendly town. Difficult to get stop sign back if removed. Disagrees with spending money to mitigate removal when it may not be necessary. More, not less, signs are needed on First Street to curb the thoroughfare, especially once Cascade Avenue is improved. Reopening the weigh station in Home Valley will decrease truck traffic. Educate truckers; report violators to their company.

Coby Wright: Registered nurse. Sees fatality on Second St as inevitable. Removing the stop sign is moving one problem to the next. What is the plan for mitigating traffic on First Street if the stop sign is removed? Ask DOT to defend its action/inaction regarding speed, pedestrian safety, and traffic in crosswalks and provide a refresher to explain their plan for improving safety of residents and visitors. Plea to WSDOT to please plan for improving traffic safety.

Larry Krug: Expressed concern about piecemeal approach with no overview. Is there a plan for protecting commerce, removing congestion, expanding the courthouse plaza, and managing trucks from Cascade Avenue?

Phil Gintner: Trucks on 1st St as an optional route won't work, it should be mandatory. There should be stop signs on Russell at First & Second. Favors speed bumps; law enforcement can't always be present. Lower the speed limit to 20MPH.

Nick Hogan - Relayed written comments from **Fire Chief Rob Farris** - Fire Department opposes pulling the stop sign; speeds are already high. Removal will increase collision risk and impede volunteers responding in personal vehicles. Would the Council consider an automated signal in front of the fire hall and EMS?

Melissa Still - Business owner, the Chevron and a new business on Russell. Why are we enabling truckers at all? They are dangerous; speeds vary. Initially favored removing the stop sign but opinion has been influenced by the good suggestions. Don't remove the stop sign, and add another at Russell & Second.

Ron Chandra - son is a truck driver. If you ban trucks, what happens to commerce? Highway 14 is often safer than I-84. Speeding is occurring despite radar signs. Should be more enforcement.

Chad Hancock, DOT Traffic Engineer – WSDOT and City are partners. Highway 14 is narrow and safety is an issue with on street parking. WSDOT’s mission is to get drivers from point to point as quickly as possible; this can be a challenging balance in communities. We know trucks are here to avoid taxes in Oregon, but taxation is a legislative issue beyond the scope of WSDOT; the highway has to be open to all users including bikes and pedestrians. Placement of a stop sign at Russell & Second would require a warrants process; in addition, there is a tendency for drivers to ignore devices they think are unnecessary. Lowering the speed limit would be ineffective when speed limits are already being violated. WSDOT sets speed limits using an 85% percentile analysis; speeds of drivers are measured with a radar gun to determine the rate at which 85% of drivers are driving at or below. Collisions occur when speeds are either too high or too low. Studies indicate that a stop sign at Russell for traffic calming is counter intuitive and would likely result in drivers driving faster after having to stop. Stop signs at every block is unreasonable when the mission is to balance the needs of local traffic with those just passing through. Photo radar could be done on City streets; not sure it is allowed on state highways and would be a question for Washington State Patrol.

Melissa Still: It’s moronic to allow pedestrians and bikes on the highway. How can that change? Could you not limit traffic to local trucks?

Chad Hancock – A Regional Transportation Council study found that there is a smaller percentage of trucks not stopping between bridges on Highway 14 than one might think. Weigh stations only discourage overweight trucks.

Phil Gintner - doubted the theory that a lower speed limit could not work; vehicles can’t drive faster than the car in front of them.

Chad Hancock – Explained platoon vehicle, and traffic counts being done during period of free flow of traffic (not during rush hour). Converting First & Second Streets to 2 one-way streets would require a jurisdictional transfer and legislative action. The Department would have to take it over.

Dave Burkey - Minimum speed in WA is 25 unless it’s a school zone; lowering to 20MPH is not an option. Aggressive driving occurs when speeds are not set appropriately.

Mary Repar: When balancing getting transportation from point to point, who is in charge of pedestrians?

Hancock: That is a challenge. In the past five years, there were only 2 recorded pedestrian collisions; one from a parallel parking incident (got backed into while standing in a parking spot) and another where vehicle’s window was taped, couldn’t see, turned left and hit a pedestrian. Collision history is reviewed annually and collision rates are evaluated. There were 33 vehicle collisions between Rock Creek Drive and Lutheran Church Road in the five year period. Statistics don’t indicate a safety problem.

Barbara Selstad - What prompted the study for the trucks? Disagrees 80% of trucks are going to Carson or locally.

Karen Ashley - Is there no state regulation preventing a stop sign on Russell and Second?

Hancock - it could be done if WSDOT thought it was the right thing to do.

Johnson - Are studies done over a period of time, or is it just a snapshot?

Hancock – It's based on volumes, and seasonal factors are considered.

Sciacca: A state highway bisecting a community has a liability to protect the residents; who has jurisdiction over violators speeding on a state highway within the city limits? (Both WSP and Sheriff's Deputies can write citations.)

Mobley - Why can't we tax trucks, which would resolve the problem?

Watness -What speed calming measures will WSDOT approve, including stop signs or lights on Highway 14? How many accidents on 1st and 2nd Streets have injured pedestrians (fatalities or injuries) in the past 10 yrs? What have the monitoring cams at each end of town found about trucking? How many miles of 2-lane state routes are there in Washington State?

Hancock - ~3000 lane miles in the state; traffic counts can be shared later. Two pedestrian collisions; no fatalities. There is no data for First Street.

Dave Burkey - National studies show more pedestrians get hit in marked crosswalks. Most people are not using marked crosswalks; they cross between marked crosswalks. Although state law grants pedestrian right of way at intersections, that is not practical. Educate pedestrians about allowing sufficient gaps before crossing.

Hansen - thanked WSDOT representatives for attending; they were excused at 7:04

Hancock – Is of the opinion that the issue is not the roadway, it is the drivers. The challenge is to get drivers to do what they should.

Dena Marshall - Asked if people were able to get some of their questions answered.

Melissa Still - Did not think WSDOT was helpful, felt like they blew us off.

Carl Schult – Skamania resident. Was surprised by traffic flow when he first moved here; it appeared we wanted to hoard traffic in more congested areas. We are now experiencing a big influx of bodies from the tour boats.

Phillip Watness - what is the zoning on First Street, and what are the parking regulations?

Barbara Robinson: resident at corner of 1st & Russell. Changed her opinion over time; now supports encouraging truckers eastbound to use 1st. Opposed to stop sign removal. They witness elderly and disabled people coming off the tour boats. Favors doing what you can with enforcement and education. Some truckers are not aware they are approaching crosswalks; install signs warning signs "crosswalks ahead." Fears if the stop sign is removed, they will never get out of their driveway.

Marshall reviewed the tabulated questions:

- What is the plan for looking after commerce, removing congestion and trucks going in and out of Cascade Avenue?
Hogan - Cascade improvements are schedule to start this summer.
Hansen - Trucks exiting and entering onto First Street would be doing so with the additional truck traffic. Trucks already exist east and west at First & Russell and merge onto Highway 14 at either the east or west end of town.
- If the stop sign is removed, what is the plan for mitigating or calming traffic?
Hogan – The plan for mitigating traffic will be for enforcement on both First and Second. We will consider adding a flashing radar feedback sign on First Street, similar to that on Second. Sheriff’s Office has reported the radar feedback signs have helped to slow traffic through town.
Weissfeld – Data from the radar feedback signs is available and was shared at the last council meeting.
Hansen – Did not have data with him, but recollection was average of 31 MPH on the east end and 33 MPH on the west. It was noted that speeds leaving town are the problem; incoming is being deterred by the signs.
Hogan – The City has jurisdiction over First Street and can do whatever it considers reasonable in terms of traffic devices there. On Second Street, WSDOT approval is required but they have approved most of the things that were asked on Second Street recently.
Anderson – Removal of the stop sign will require additional mitigating measures. Signals of some form for the fire hall and ambulance hall will be necessary. Self activated pedestrian signals may also be an option. A barrier for distracted patrons leaving the post office might be needed.
- How many people do we have coming to the Post Office and using that crosswalk?
Hogan – No data about how many patrons use the post office.
- What are the grounds for opposing the suggestion of one way streets?
Hogan - Council decided a year ago, based on public input, not to do the one-way couplet. That concept is not being currently considered.
- Why do the stop signs need to be removed?
Hogan – The stop signs don’t need to be removed; it is perceived to be an incentive to encourage use, and if they are not removed trucks will not take the alternate First Street route.
- Would you consider a signal in front of the fire hall and EMS?
Hogan – installing an automated signal at the fire hall and EMS would certainly be considered. If the decision is made to remove the stop sign, the City would work with the departments to install an FOB activated device. It is assumed the City would also simultaneously install pedestrian activated crosswalk signal lights.
- Could you put stop signs at Russell & Second?
Hogan – A stop sign on Second St would require WSDOT approval, and would be subject to meeting specific criteria. WSDOT has agreed to work with us to add a sign on Second St/Hwy 14 for “Optional Truck Route” on 1st St. That is significant progress from its prior straight up denial.

- Could you make it mandatory for trucks to use First Street?
Hogan – We cannot mandate trucks to use First Street.
- What are the zoning and parking regulations on First Street?
Shumaker – Zoning is C1
Cosentino – Overnight parking is prohibited on Second Street between 2AM and 5AM. Truck parking on First Street is prohibited.
- Could speed bumps, radar speed traps, blinking lights for first responders, and more stop signs be considered? What else are you trying?
Hogan - WSDOT is updating the data collected in the 90's by installing cameras to measure the number and types of trucks traveling through Stevenson. City Council has written letters and campaigned for neighbors to write letters to legislators to address the taxation inequity

Unidentified speaker - Speed bumps will discourage and slow trucks without impacting local traffic.

Marshall offered audience members one last 10-second per person opportunity to comment.

- McKenzie: Do you have an overall plan?
- Robinson: Can you try signing for the optional route before removing the sign?
- Versari: Increase traffic enforcement and consider photo enforcement
- Gintner: Owns a business on Cascade
- Repar: What are you going to do about the weigh station?
- Klever: Put optional routes on all streets in Stevenson
- Sciacca: 82% for survey respondents favored using First Street as an optional bypass; don't disregard the survey.

COUNCIL DELIBERATION

Council members agreed there is no simple solution and debated the merits and repercussions of ideas presented for diverting traffic off Second onto First Street. Changing driver attitudes is key. Pulling the stop sign on First raises concern that use of the city street may escalate to that of a state highway, requiring more maintenance.

To the suggestion for adding a stop sign at Russell on Second, Hansen cautioned that traffic/pedestrian/accident counts do not meet the warrants for a controlled intersection.

Eric Hansen provided cost estimates for implementing various components:

Traffic Revision New Signs & Sign Removal at First: \$2000

Flashing pedestrian crossing signals: \$2500 each

Emergency Overhead Hand Activated Signals: \$5500 each

The flashing radar feedback signs installed at the entrances cost approximately \$8K-10K each.

Hogan stated that none of these current ideas are necessarily cost prohibitive and should be driven more by what makes sense for the City. The City should budget a maintenance reserve for First Street if traffic is diverted there.

Staff to provide more information for the next Council meeting about:

- Photo radar for both 1st & 2nd

- Adding a stop light at 2nd & Russell
- Have WSDOT enumerate what other traffic calming measures are possible for SR14 (i.e. speed bumps)
- Will WSDOT allow signs on SR14 for alternate route without pulling the stop sign on First?
- Could results be measured if Alternate Route is signed and stop sign on First remains?

McKenzie – It is dangerous to make this decision on the fly even with the best of intentions; develop a plan and consult professionals.

Repar – if considering a master plan, analyze what it will cost; the east end will not work for trucks westbound.

Ashley – worth reconsidering one way couplet and developing a long range plan.

Morris – take care that solution does not just create another problem.

Sciacca – the people who live here are the experts.

Adjourned: 8:00 PM

Frank Cox

Nick Hogan, City Administrator/Clerk

Minutes by Carla Cosentino