

**Meeting Minutes
Transportation Commission
October 12, 2010**

The State College Transportation Commission met on Tuesday, October 12, 2010 in Room 304 of the Borough Municipal Building. Chairman Delano called the meeting to order at 12:18 p.m.

Members Present: Kate Delano, Paul Jovanis, Jordyn Drayton, Ray Najjar, and Greg Halpin.

Others Present: Mark Whitfield, Public Works Director; Amy Story, Borough Engineer; Carl Hess, Planning Department Director (arrived at 12:30); Aaron Fayish of Stahl Sheaffer Engineering; Alan Sam, Environmental Coordinator/Arborist; Courtney Hayden, Environmental AmeriCorps member (serving State College Borough); Charlie DeBow, Parking Manager; Scott Fitzgerald, Parking Garage Operations Supervisor; Hugh Mose of CATA, Jody Alessandrine from the Downtown Improvement District, Debbie Lang, Staff Assistant.

Approval of Minutes – Mr. Jovanis noted the line stating “there were no citizens present to discuss items not on the agenda” should be removed from the September 14, 2010 minutes as Mr. Wilson was present.

Mr. Najjar asked that the minutes also be corrected under Discussion Items, with regard to the statement from Mr. Fayish regarding the Atherton/Parkway intersection and “vehicle crashes”. He recommended the wording be changed to “severity weighted excess crashes” since the ranking of this intersection with regard to “vehicle crashes” is higher than fifth from the bottom.

Following these discussions, Mr. Jovanis moved to approve the September 14, 2010 minutes as amended. Mr. Gastiger seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Public Hour – Hearing of Citizens

Geoffrey Wilson of 441 West Nittany Avenue stated he wished to call attention to the article in *The Daily Collegian* article on Hugh Mose and wished to commend him on the article.

Discussion Items

Proposed Parking Changes

Mr. DeBow presented the Commission with a Power Point presentation on these changes. Copies of this presentation were also submitted to the members. Mr. DeBow stated we need to change our philosophy on how we create our policy. The goal is to

price the street parking at a level in which we achieve an occupancy rate of around 85% at peak time periods.. He noted evening and daytime parking should work in tandem. He also noted eliminating free parking on the street will not discourage on-street parking, but rather create the opportunity for more cars to use the spaces for shorter periods of time. He discussed changing time on meters after 6:00 p.m.; programming meters for time limits; garage rates; and chronic offenders being fined more per ticket after a certain amount of tickets are issued.

Mr. Najjar stated he did not realize fines were so low especially because of the amount of human resources needed to enforce parking.

In response to a question from Ms. Delano, Mr. DeBow stated the meters do show how long ago they expired but we do not track this information. Mr. DeBow stated there is a 5 minute grace period on the meters but no grace period in the garages.

Mr. Jovanis noted this proposed change is not a revenue enhancer since a person who is getting 84-\$6.00 tickets may choose to park in the garages, we will be losing money.

Mr. DeBow discussed the lots and McAllister deck to kiosk payment and eventually having the option to pay by cell phone.

Mr. Halpin asked if the meter rates were raised and the same number of spaces was being used, what Mr. DeBow will do. Mr. DeBow stated the rates would be raised again, but he did not believe this would happen. He discussed the studies of rates on demand in San Francisco.

Ms. Delano questioned the meters on the streets no longer being free after 6:00 p.m. Mr. DeBow stated the rates would go to \$1.00/hour. He noted parking on the streets after 6:00 p.m. has always been that way and a study was completed several years ago resulting in this policy. He stated convenience of parking on-street and willingness to pay will result in people using the new program.

In response to a question from the Commission, Mr. DeBow stated the hourly rate in the garages would be dropped to 50¢ in the evenings starting at 6pm instead of the current 10pm change. Mr. DeBow stated it is not free but convenience parking people want.

In response to a question from Mr. Mose, Mr. DeBow stated we do not have any idea of the destination of the on-street, free parkers but the strategy does not require us to know this. In response to a question from Ms. Delano, Mr. DeBow stated he did not know if the meter rate can be changed to 50¢ in the evening but he is checking into this but believes only the time can be changed and not the rate. He believes the meter heads would need to be changed to accomplish this.

Mr. Halpin asked if we could have paid parking on the street and free in the garages to achieve this goal. Mr. DeBow stated because of bond issues, etc. the garages needed

to have income to sustain the structures. Mr. Halpin suggested better signs on the streets directing motorists to the lots and garages and cheaper parking in these areas.

Mr. Gastiger stated restaurants do not see a particular parking problem in the downtown. He noted valet parking in the garages would be a good idea. He noted in Nassau County, New York, the residents are given rewards, i.e. free beach parking, etc. and felt the Borough should give residents similar rewards. He questioned how the Parking Office tracks \$6.00 tickets versus \$25.00 tickets. Mr. DeBow responded this information is tracked through the handheld units the officers carry to issue tickets.

Ms. Delano stated she did not feel the fourth ticket is the level in which fines should be raised. Mr. Najjar stated the Commission should send the message right away that the ticket rate is too low. Mr. Jovanis stated he would caution against convenience versus price cost. He stated he liked the idea but would like to get a better grip on street parking during the evenings.

Mr. Drayton stated the occupancy rate is 75-80% now but felt wider sidewalks, etc. where everyone can co-mingle would be a better idea. He felt raising the daily rates during the day would force motorists to the garages and allow the Borough to eliminate street spaces for use for other prime real estate and other downtown ideas.

Mr. Geoffrey Wilson stated his vehicle has a handicapped plate for his wife and the trouble they have is finding a vacant handicapped meter where she needs to go. He stated he felt meters were not installed to generate revenue but to provide convenience. He felt more handicapped spaces should be added in the downtown area. Mr. DeBow advised Mr. Wilson that two handicapped spaces have been added earlier this year in the 200 blocks of East and West College Avenue.

Mr. Gastiger asked about zoning meters, i.e. downtown more than further out. Mr. DeBow stated he felt this would cause confusion. He stated he is not opposed to this but would be willing to look into it. He noted the areas affected would be the 100 blocks of East and West College Avenue and the 100 and 200 blocks of South Allen Street. Mr. DeBow stated 15 minute meters achieve the same revenue as 90 minute meters.

In response to a question from the Commission, Mr. DeBow stated a license plate study was not completed to determine the destination of downtown parkers with regard to the percentage of employees versus students. It was suggested he talk to the PSU Parking Office to see if this information can be obtained.

Jody Alessandrine from the Downtown Improvement District office stated he appreciated Mr. DeBow, Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Whitfield meeting with their Retail Advisory Board and Parking Study Committee on this matter. He stated although they appreciate this new approach to the downtown parking matter, they have concerns about the fee after 6:00 p.m. He stated it might make sense in the 100 and 200 blocks of East and West College Avenue but not further down the street. He stated many of the businesses are not open after 6:00 p.m. He felt this change would be an added

burden to the parking enforcement staff. He also stated there is a false claim there is no parking downtown. He felt this change would be giving people an added excuse to not come downtown. He stated he agreed with the enforcement numbers but felt there was a small amount of chronic violators. He agreed with the statement made by a Commission member that 4 violations were too small of a number to set for increasing the fine. He suggested perhaps enforcing on a monthly basis rather than yearly. He stated he applauded the technological uses being considered. He also stated revenue generated from parking meters can help buy down debts on the garages and felt this should be looked into as viable.

Because Mr. Alessandrino needed to leave for another meeting, he also wished to thank Mr. Sam for his report regarding proposed bike racks in the downtown.

Beaver/Fraser Realignment Project

Ms. Story reviewed each phase of this project. She noted there would be changes to the sidewalk widths, bus stops added, Loading and Unloading zones across from the proposed Fraser Centre building and new decorative traffic signals. She also advised the parking lane along Beaver Avenue, heading east, would be converted to sidewalks. She advised the Commission there was an Open House held with businesses and owners and all supported this project. She discussed the construction schedule for this project.

In response to a question from a member, Ms. Story advised the right-of-way to realign this street was obtained years ago. Staff also advised the members that regardless of whether or not the Fraser Centre project is completed, this project will be completed as it is crucial to the downtown signal timing. Staff also advised all utilities for the Fraser Centre project will be in place during this project so that the street will not need to be disturbed again during the construction of Fraser Centre.

In response to a question from the Commission, Ms. Story stated there will be a loss of parking on Beaver Avenue; however, the chicanes will stay the same. Ms. Delano noted this realignment will help pedestrians at this intersection.

Mr. Gastiger mentioned the sub-committee working on the aesthetic concerns of Calder Way made recommendations to improve Calder Way and wondered if any of these recommendations can be incorporated into this project. Mr. Whitfield stated because the funding is federally earmarked funds, the project scope is limited.

Proposed Bike Rack Locations

Mr. Sam advised those present that he has reviewed the proposed list with Mr. Alessandrino and a number of business owners and property owners at the proposed locations. He noted the site at the corner of Garner Street and College Avenue was a specific request. He noted funding is available for this project and the installation will take place in late fall/early winter.

Mr. Drayton questioned the bike rack at the southeast corner of Allen Street and College Avenue. Mr. Sam stated the single rack currently in front of Moyer Jewelers will be removed and replaced with a multi-rack. Mr. Drayton stated this is a very, very high pedestrian area. He stated racks “bleed out” into the pedestrian space. He stated he felt the focus should be on Allen Street with possibly removing one parking space and adding a multi-rack in the removed parking area. Mr. Sam noted he looked at this site and the single bike rack and a garbage can will be removed to make room for the larger rack. Mr. Drayton also questioned the bike-shaped racks and cautioned against using these racks. He noted there is a local vendor who is competitively priced and we should check with this vendor for purchase of the racks.

Mr. DeBow left the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Wilson commended Mr. Sam on the nice job he did on this recommendation. He stated he is concerned with the smaller racks and wondered if the single racks that are being removed will be moved to a new location. He expressed concerns that some bikes seem to be parked for long periods of time, sometimes even days, and asked if there some type of sign could be placed on the racks asking that bikes remain no more than 4 hours on the racks. Mr. Wilson also noted there are two bikes chained to the protective tree guard at Sera Tec. He thought there was an ordinance against this.

Mr. Mose left the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Mr. Sam stated he will look into relocating the single racks to other locations. He also discussed the ordinance against chaining bikes to trees and signs.

2011 Work Plan

Mr. Whitfield advised the members due to the lateness of the meeting, they can e-mail any additions, corrections or changes to the 2011 Work Plan to him prior to the next meeting. Mr. Jovanis asked what Item #11 was on the current work plan since he and Ms. Delano were the Commission’s representative on this group. Mr. Sam explained what this group has done, to-date. Ms. Delano asked that notes or minutes from that meeting be sent to her and Mr. Jovanis.

Liaison Reports

Chairman’s Report – There was no report from the Chairman.

MPO/CRPA/COG Transportation – There was no one present from CRPA to provide a report.

Centre Area Transportation Authority – Since Mr. Mose left the meeting, there was no report from CATA.

Penn State Transportation – No one was present from the University to submit a report.

PENNDOT – No one was present from PENNDOT to provide a report.

Borough Planning Commission – Since Mr. Hess left the meeting earlier, there was no report from this Commission.

Borough Engineer – Ms. Story had nothing further to report.

Environmental Coordinator – Mr. Sam introduced Courtney Hayden who will be with the Borough working on sustainability matters through a grant from AmeriCorps.

Parking Office – Mr. Fitzgerald stated there was nothing further to report from this office.

State College Police – No one was present from the Police Department to provide a report.

Items of Information - The next regular Commission meeting will be November 9, 2010 at 12:15 pm.

The Chair is requested to provide a report of the work of the Commission to date at Council's November 19, 2010 meeting and to present to Council the Commission's proposed 2011 Work Plan. This will be a noon meeting.

Any Other Matter – Mr. Najjar questioned the meeting schedule for the Commission. Mr. Whitfield stated this schedule is usually discussed and set by the members in November.

Mr. Najjar also stated the leading pedestrian interval is a marvelous success. He asked if others will be added. Mr. Whitfield responded that two other intersections will be added. Ms. Story stated that once the controllers are received, the intersections of Beaver & Atherton and College & Atherton will be added. Mr. Whitfield advised the Borough is working with PennDOT on this project. Mr. Najjar stated every intersection should have this interval.

Adjournment – With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 1:37 p.m.

Debra Lang, Staff Assistant